

# The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought

Edited by Douglas Moggach  
and Gareth Stedman Jones





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The revolutions that swept across Europe in 1848 marked a turning point in the history of political and social thought. They raised questions of democracy, nationhood, freedom, and social cohesion that have remained among the key issues of modern politics, and still help to define the major ideological currents – liberalism, socialism, republicanism, anarchism, conservatism – in which these questions continue to be debated today.

This collection of essays by internationally prominent historians of political thought examines the 1848 Revolutions from a pan-European perspective and offers research on questions of state power, nationality, religion, the economy, poverty, labour, and freedom. Even where the revolutionary movements failed to achieve their explicit objectives of transforming the state and social relations, they set the agenda for subsequent regimes and contributed to the shaping of modern European thought and institutions.

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# Introduction

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*Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman Jones*

Spirit often seems to have forgotten and lost itself, but inwardly opposed to itself, it is inwardly working ever forward (as when Hamlet says of the ghost of his father, ‘Well said old mole! canst work i’ the ground so fast?’), until grown strong in itself it bursts asunder the crust of the earth which divided it from the sun, . . . so that the earth crumbles away.<sup>1</sup>

Upheavals like the fall of European Communism in 1989 or the Arab Spring in 2011, remind us of the fundamental importance of revolutions in signalling large-scale and world-historical changes. Often unforeseen in their emergence and cataclysmic in their effects, these events transform political institutions and reshape the historical values and assumptions governing the behaviour and ambitions of polities. Yet revolutions – particularly when spread across a wide and diverse region – are also uneven and unpredictable in their degrees of success and in their impact, both immediately and in the long term. Often, the immediate result is a political situation which appears to be worse than before – spasms of brutal violence, civil wars, massive displacements of populations, and the emergence of highly authoritarian regimes to quash the disorder. But even when the revolutions appear to fail, they exert profound and durable effects on the political landscape: attempts to restore the status quo confront difficult, if not insuperable, obstacles. Although large-scale movements of protest and contestation might be silenced by repression, the causes which prompted the revolutionary uprisings continue nevertheless to operate, subterraneously. Hegel’s apt evocation of Hamlet, cited above, refers in the original text not to the moment of revolutionary crisis and its aftermath, but to the slow unfolding of freedom and reason throughout the entire historical process; but the idea of a ‘cunning of revolution’ had already been applied by Hegel’s student Bakunin to characterise the results of 1848 not as a defeat, but as the imperceptible

<sup>1</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and F. S. Simpson, 3 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), vol. III, pp. 546–47.

yet implacable uprooting of the old order, despite its apparent victory.<sup>2</sup> To affirm this is not to subscribe to a doctrine of historical inevitability, but to maintain a kind of conjunctural logic, a logic of ‘determinate negations’, in Hegelian parlance; namely, of the central tasks that must be addressed if any significant future change or progress is to occur. After the revolution, its opponents too cannot evade its persistent demands, even when the response is momentarily to suppress them. Such critical revolutionary situations contain the possibility of many divergent solutions, including temporary stagnation or regression, and no outcome is uniquely predetermined within the complex of conflicting forces. The decisive questions faced by post-revolutionary regimes are often these: Which social and political groups will lead the transitions mandated but not realised by the revolution? How speedily or reluctantly will they act? From whom will they muster support, empowering or disempowering which segments of society? Around what specific programme of political and economic measures will they mobilise, clinging to which inherited privileges, and inflecting the movement in which direction? The revolution sets the agenda, confronting post-revolutionary regimes, of whatever complexion, with profound challenges and imperative tasks, to carry out the objectives of the revolution by other means. If, as the bitter experiences of the twentieth century have confirmed, history affords no guarantee of its progressive course, nonetheless the central issues posed by revolutions appear to be irrepressible, and to require attention and resolution. The fundamental question of 1848, the ‘determinate negation’ of the existing order, is that of the nature, forms, and limits of the democratic state, the emergence of democratic modernity.<sup>3</sup>

In our contemporary world, the rise of right-wing populism in the United States and Europe displays marked affinities with the post-1848 situation in France, and the figure of Napoleon III, both ludicrous and sinister, seems to anticipate certain types of present-day politicians. There are even more eerie resemblances between now and then; some of the demagogic discourse of Bonaparte *le petit* is not unlike that of Trump.<sup>4</sup> The varying degrees to which protesters and insurgents envisage democratic solutions to their demands, and the widely differing responses of existing regimes – as in the Arab Spring or ongoing unrest in Hong Kong – suggest comparisons, not with 1789, 1917, 1949, or 1989, but rather with

<sup>2</sup> See J.-C. Angaut, ‘Revolution and the Slav Question: 1848 and Michael Bakunin’, [Chapter 17](#) of this volume.

<sup>3</sup> See T.C. Jones, ‘French Republicanism after 1848’, [Chapter 3](#) of this volume. and G. Stedman Jones, ‘Elusive Signifiers: 1848 and the Language of “Class Struggle”’, [Chapter 18](#) of this volume.

<sup>4</sup> See V. Hugo, *Napoléon le Petit* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1882).

1848, where political discourses and political organisation were both more rudimentary and more inchoate. Renewed study of the 1848 Revolutions in the current world conjuncture is therefore suggestive and fruitful for our own times. If a more optimistic tone prevailed in 2011 when this project was initiated, it would seem that the course of contemporary history mirrors that of the Revolutions of 1848 themselves.

There are also major intellectual and historiographical grounds for a fresh examination of the 1848 Revolutions as a turning point in the history of political thought. Since the 1960s, in Cambridge and elsewhere there has developed a novel and distinctive way of understanding intellectual history and the history of political thought. Despite their divergent interests and often clashing preoccupations, its various practitioners have shared at least one methodological starting point. In this approach, a text is understood as the intervention of an author within a particular historically situated discursive context, which it is the task of the historian to reconstruct. This approach was first developed in the early modern period and was particularly associated with the work of John Pocock<sup>5</sup> and Quentin Skinner.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, it has also been developed in the history of political economy by Istvan Hont,<sup>7</sup> Donald Winch,<sup>8</sup> Emma Rothschild,<sup>9</sup> and others. The method has been effectively applied in the field of ancient political thought, especially Roman republicanism and its heritage.<sup>10</sup> It is striking, however, that the impact of this shift in emphasis upon the understanding of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectual history and political thought, without being absent, has been discernibly less.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); M. van Gelderen and Q. Skinner (eds.), *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); A. Brett and J. Tully (eds.), *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> I. Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> D. Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> E. Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, C. Nederman, 'Rhetoric, reason, and republic: Republicanisms ancient, medieval, and modern' in J. Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 249–59; E. Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Contributions to this field include D. Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); D. Moggach (ed.), *Politics, Religion,*

Nowhere is this relative neglect more visible than in the century following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The effect of the French Revolution was fundamentally to challenge ancient and early modern conceptions of the republic. These conceptions lost their coherence in the face of the incursion of new discourses born of the French revolutionary era. These included socialism, political economy, nationalism, positivism, ultramontanism, the invention of modern forms of representative democracy, and the crystallisation of a new nineteenth-century creed, which came to be called 'liberalism'.

In the middle of this period of fundamental yet inchoate transition in the understanding of politics and the place of 'the people' within it, came the European Revolutions of 1848. During the last fifty years, there have been many excellent studies of individual revolutions as episodes in political or social-economic history.<sup>12</sup> But it is striking that there have been virtually no collective attempts to reconsider how these revolutions and their aftermath ought now to be understood in the light of these new historiographic approaches, especially through the prism of political thought and the changes in paradigm that occurred within it. We seek here, in comparative pan-European perspective, a closer and more accurate account of the diverse forms in which the 1848 revolutionary crisis in Europe was grasped by its proponents and its adversaries, and in which various agendas for social change were advanced, often in polemical interaction with other currents within the diverse insurrectionary and reform movements. The retrieval of this historical experience, the analysis of its elements, and the restitution of its proper intellectual context are of theoretical and practical value. Its problems are the precursors of our own.

There is convincing evidence for the fundamental significance of this period as a turning point in political thought. The years around 1848 witnessed the confusion following the first introduction of representative 'democracy' into European political debate (universal male suffrage and the mass mobilisation of the peasantry); the centrality of 'the social question' in the light of workers' revolts and the multiple, conflicting

and Art: *Hegelian Debates* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011); and G. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, P. H. Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); P. Rosanvallon, *Le Sacre du Citoyen. Histoire intellectuelle du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); J. Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals. The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848–49* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). One comprehensive survey, stressing the 'triple revolution' (political, national, social), is D. Dowe, H.-G. Haupt, D. Langewiesche, and J. Sperber (eds.), *Europe in 1848. Revolution and Reform* (New York: Berghahn, 2000).



pre-1848 ‘socialist’ schemes of social reorganisation; the first attempts to formulate a post-1848 programme of social democracy; elitist anxieties on the part of liberals and republicans in the face of new forms of mass politics; a proliferation of contending ideas of the nation and ‘nationalism’; Catholicism’s anti-liberal turn towards papal infallibility and customary folk belief; political disenchantment among progressives and the demise of philosophical idealism; growing interest in realist- and science-based, or positivist conceptions of political and social development. All these differing constituents came together in the mid-century crisis. The studies in this volume demonstrate the Revolutions of 1848 as episodes in the long course of social and political transformation that engenders the modern democratic order. The values, complexities, limitations, and alternatives of this order were already under scrutiny by the figures studied here; their divergent answers, though often vacillating or fragmentary, merit closer study as aspects of this formative process.

Our first objective is thus to provide a closer contextualisation of the theoretical and political debates that animated Europe in the 1830s and 1840s and in the aftermath of the revolutions, as proponents and adversaries sought to evaluate the prospects for democratic change or to contest them. We inquire how the meanings and implications of democracy manifested themselves in the internal polemics among revolutionaries and in their relations with theoretical and political opponents, such as restoration conservatism. We inquire further how engagement with the demands forwarded by the revolutionary movements continued to condition the politics and the thinking of the post-revolutionary regimes in Europe, even those of markedly reactionary cast. Along with the richness and variety of revolutionary thought, in its national and ideological colourations, the variants of conservatism also find a place here, in their differing responses to the revolution and its legacy.<sup>13</sup> The critiques of traditionalism, religious orthodoxy, and Romanticism all have their intellectual core in these confrontations. Romanticism, rejected by many 1848’ers as a bulwark of the existing political order, with its irrationalities and privileges, can also serve revolutionary ends, as in the incipient ideas of nationality, national identity, and culture.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, many 1848 revolutionaries decried religion as a repressive force supporting the old power constellation, the alliance of throne and altar that, after the quashing of the French Revolution in 1815,

<sup>13</sup> See A. Sked, ‘The Nationality Problem in the Habsburg Monarchy and the Revolutions of 1848: A reassessment’, [Chapter 14](#) of this volume; A. Ross, ‘Post-Revolutionary Politics: The Case of the Prussian Ministry of State’, [Chapter 12](#) of this volume.

<sup>14</sup> See J. F. Beecher, ‘Lamartine, the Girondins and 1848’, [Chapter 1](#) of this volume.

had been reconsecrated by the Holy Alliance;<sup>15</sup> yet others insisted that religion was a cohesive force promoting solidarity and mobilisation among the oppressed, or across class lines.<sup>16</sup> The pan-European context is central to our inquiry: the heritage of the French Revolution of 1789; the insights, deficiencies, and transmissibility of French socialism; questions of industrialisation and urban poverty; movements for popular sovereignty, parliamentary government, and institutional reform. Attention to these issues enables a closer and more concrete study of relations and rifts within the broad revolutionary movements that encompassed much of Europe in 1848, as well as among their opponents in adapting and responding to these influences.

To contextualise, however, is not to relegate the figures under study to historical oblivion, as if they no longer spoke to us. The recovery (as far as possible) of their genuine meaning in context better allows us to understand their engagement with philosophical and political issues of greater scope and actuality, to grasp exactly how these questions were posed at their inception (and thus perhaps to rephrase them in their current significance), and to delineate a number of distinct intellectual and political positions. Such closer discrimination is necessary to our second objective, namely to document the contributions and the relevance of the thinkers of 1848 to significant and enduring theoretical debates. There are several areas in which these contributions can be identified.

## **I Democratisation**

The struggle against oppressive power, and for the establishment of popular sovereignty, is everywhere a leitmotif of 1848. But how is the popular will to be formulated and expressed? 1848 offers a plethora of answers to this decisive question of political sovereignty, and our studies trace the principal lines of response. The extent and qualifications of suffrage, the establishment of civil equality, the forms of the democratic state, the division of powers within it, the need to check executive power: all these are vital subjects of contention among revolutionaries. A fundamental issue is that of the nature of representation: was centralised representative government or local self-government to be preferred? Was direct democracy still a possibility in the modern

<sup>15</sup> See D. Moggach, 'German Republicans and Socialists in the Prelude to 1848', [Chapter 9](#) of this volume; N. Waszek, 'David Friedrich Strauss in 1848: An analysis of His "Theologicopolitical" Speeches', [Chapter 10](#) of this volume.

<sup>16</sup> See J. Parry, 'Christian Socialism, Class Collaboration, and British Public Life after 1848', [Chapter 7](#) of this volume.

world,<sup>17</sup> or was it a mere vestige of an antiquated republican ideal? Admitting the necessity of representative institutions at the national level, what degree of decentralisation of decision-making was desirable? Was local authority a bulwark against the bureaucratic central state, or was it a bastion of inherited privilege resistant to the revolutionary challenge? The question of extra-parliamentary forms of democratic engagement was also raised, and it found a response in vigorous movements of workers' associations<sup>18</sup> and the establishment of trade unions. The struggle for the extension of the right to vote, for universal manhood suffrage at least, continued unabatedly and transnationally, though it expressed itself with varying degrees of resolution, and by reformist or revolutionary means.<sup>19</sup> In some circles, direct self-rule implied the repudiation of the state itself: here modern anarchism was born.<sup>20</sup> Conservatism, too, was reconfigured under the impact of revolutionary pressure: when in possession of political power, it had to adapt to the exigencies of market society with its characteristic social antagonisms, and to effect a programme of modernisation and economic expansion while safeguarding traditional statuses.<sup>21</sup>

Significant concrete reforms were also proposed and executed by the 1848 revolutionaries in various European states. Capital punishment and slavery were abolished, press censorship was ended or restricted, and the freedom of association was recognised. The right to work was proclaimed. Even if these achievements were frequently undermined in the post-revolutionary repression, they were not completely extinguished, but continued to guide progressive politics throughout the later nineteenth century and beyond.

Internationally, too, the need was envisaged to co-ordinate levels of law, linking the individual nation, federated groups of peoples, and a future cosmopolitan republican order. The question of European unity and its prerequisites was posed anew.<sup>22</sup> Reflections on the heritage of 1848 offered inexhaustible material for subsequent political thought, at the level of normative assessment and institutional provision.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See A.-S. Chambost, 'Socialist visions of direct democracy: The Mid-Century Crisis of Popular Sovereignty and the Constitutional Legacy of the Jacobins', [Chapter 4](#) of this volume.

<sup>18</sup> See S. Hayat, 'Working-Class Socialism in 1848 in France', [Chapter 5](#) of this volume.

<sup>19</sup> See W. De Ridder, 'On the "Absence of Spirit": The Legacy of the Abstinence from Revolution in Belgium', [Chapter 8](#) of this volume; D. Siclován, '1848 and German Socialism', [Chapter 11](#) of this volume.

<sup>20</sup> See E. Castleton, 'The Many Revolutions of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon', [Chapter 2](#) of this volume; Angaut, 'Revolution and the Slav question'.

<sup>21</sup> D. Kelly '“The Goal of That Pure and Noble Yearning”: Friedrich Meinecke's Visions of 1848', [Chapter 13](#) of this volume.

<sup>22</sup> Beecher, 'Lamartine'. <sup>23</sup> See Kelly, 'Friedrich Meinecke's Visions of 1848'.

Continued pressure for democratic reform was definitive of the politics of the post-revolutionary era.

We should also pay attention to those areas of Europe where no break-down occurred, but where recent struggles, at their height in the 1830s and early 1840s, had produced a transformative democratic effect. In Britain, the tide of militancy, associated with the strikes, rebellions, and demonstrations of Chartism, had been ebbing since 1843, and the famous Chartist demonstration of 10 April ended in a fiasco. But it had left two enduring residues, which helped to shape the aspirations of 1848 and of the quarter of a century which followed.

The first was a model of democratic representative government, which did not necessarily entail support for the declaration of a republic or the endorsement of the revolutionary aspirations of 1789–94. It was a demand grounded, not upon liberty, equality, and fraternity, but upon Locke's argument that legitimate government rested upon the consent of the governed and went back to the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1689. This was a trajectory of progress, which was to remain attractive to moderate reformers from Belgium to Italy through the 1850s and 1860s.

The second enduring legacy of British reforming movements during the preceding twenty years was the demand to limit child work and control hours of labour associated with factory reform and the Ten Hours Movement. Similar demands were discussed in the Luxembourg labour assembly in 1848, and by the 1860s, this movement, which was to a significant extent Christian and Tory in origin, had become one of the cornerstones the nascent social-democratic movement. As Karl Marx put it as a conclusion to his chapter on the working day in *Capital*: 'in place of the pompous catalogue of The inalienable Rights of Man (of 1789) comes the modest Magna Carta of a legally limited working day'.<sup>24</sup>

## II The Nation and Nationalism

The question of democracy also encompassed processes of internal and external emancipation of the nationalities of Europe. The emergence of the national question, and the many prospects for its solution, is much more complex than the conventional image of 1848 as a 'springtime of peoples' would convey. Far from naïvely celebrating the benefits of national independence, many thinkers of the revolutionary period entertained deep critical reservations on nationality and nationhood as

<sup>24</sup> K. Marx, *Capital* vol. I, K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works* (henceforth *MECW*), 50 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1976), vol.35, pp. 306–7.

vehicles of emancipation.<sup>25</sup> If democratic national unification and the creation of a common internal market were among the major demands of German progressives, elsewhere in central Europe conflicting views prevailed on the relation of nationality to Empire: the contest between imperial reform and national independence was by no means decided by 1848. The currency of proposals for federal reforms within the Habsburg Empire, and broad resistance even in revolutionary circles to the formation of ethnic nation states in 1848, are among the important results of our studies. This resistance was multi-faceted. Where older traditions of republican municipal self-government existed, as in northern Italy, opposition focused on the autocratic centralisation threatened by the expansion of the new nation state itself. Here resistance took the form of a defence of local, civic identity, which was compatible with imperial rule but not with the new agencies of national power. The older ideas of autonomy within the larger imperial structure were invoked to contest the legitimacy and the emancipatory character of the emergent nation state.<sup>26</sup> Yet even among its strongest proponents, the imperial structure was recognised to be in dire need of renewal; centralising tendencies emanating from Vienna had also to be vigorously countered by local authorities, and new means had to be found to accommodate linguistic and cultural groups within the reformed empire.<sup>27</sup> On the other side of the debate, advocates of the national principle faced similar difficulties: not only the threat posed by homogenisation and centralised authority under the new nation-state itself, but also the problem of negotiating relations among disparate linguistic communities<sup>28</sup> and determining the status of ethnic minorities in view of their potential absorption by the dominant group. Further dangers lay in the possible domination of small ethnic states by outside hegemonic powers, precluding the practice of authentic self-government.<sup>29</sup> The contributors to this volume conclude that in many cases, the emergence of vociferous demands for independent nationhood only post-dates the suppression of the Revolutions of 1848. For all the vacillations that accompanied them, the issues of ethnic and civic nationalisms, and their relations to the democratic principle, were now firmly set on the

<sup>25</sup> See G. Varouxakis, '1848 and British Political Thought on "The Principle of Nationality"', [Chapter 6](#) of this volume.

<sup>26</sup> See M. Isabella, 'The Political Thought of a New Constitutional Monarchy: Piedmont after 1848', [Chapter 16](#) of this volume.

<sup>27</sup> See A. Körner, 'National Movements against Nation State. Bohemia and Lombardy between the Habsburg Empire, the German Confederation, and Piedmont', [Chapter 15](#) of this volume, and Sked, 'Nationality problem'.

<sup>28</sup> De Ridder, 'On the absence of spirit'. <sup>29</sup> Körner, 'National movements'.

political and theoretical agenda, and continued to command the attention of post-revolutionary regimes across the continent.<sup>30</sup>

### III State and Civil Society

The recognition of the social question over the entire political spectrum of the 1840s,<sup>31</sup> and the associated problems of urban destitution and exclusion in the midst of abundance, made it imperative to rethink the relations between the state and civil society. If, as for example Kant had argued, the economic independence of the voter was a prerequisite to active political participation,<sup>32</sup> it was possible to conclude, with many 1848'ers, that it was therefore incumbent upon the state to guarantee such independence, as an implication of universal suffrage (though this conclusion could be reached by many routes). The social and democratic republic emerging from the revolution had a duty to assure state provision of the means of livelihood where necessary, to uphold the right to work, and to undertake fiscal measures and public works to sustain its citizens. The aim of citizen empowerment involved (frequently) promoting women's suffrage, re-abolishing slavery in the French colonies, mitigating the lingering effects of serfdom in continental Europe, and developing large-scale public education programmes.<sup>33</sup>

Another dimension of the social question was the consequence of the abolition of the old order of estates by the French Revolution, and the emergence of modern, atomised mercantile society. Hegel had described the modern world both as a culture of diremption,<sup>34</sup> alienation, and stubbornly opposed interests and also as the source of a new emancipatory potential and of new forms of solidarity compatible with social differentiation and individual rights.<sup>35</sup> This fundamental ambiguity of modernity is at the heart of the reflections of the subjects covered in this volume. In their combat against privilege and hierarchy, and in their struggles against alienation and lack of freedom in various aspects of

<sup>30</sup> To choose merely one example of a voluminous literature, R. Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> D. Langewiesche, 'Republik, konstitutionelle monarchie und "soziale Frage": Grundprobleme der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 230/3 (1980), 529–47.

<sup>32</sup> I. Kant, 'On the common saying: "This may be true in theory, but it does not apply in practice"' in H. Reiss (ed.), *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 74–79.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, 'French republicanism'; Chambost, 'Socialist visions'; Parry, 'Christian socialism'.

<sup>34</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik, Sämtliche Werke*, H. Glockner (ed.), 25 vols. (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1964), vol. XII, pp. 88, 90–91.

<sup>35</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, A. W. Wood (ed.), trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §260.

modern life, they tended to recognise the modern division of labour, incipient industrialisation, and urbanisation as historical achievements, promising a more prosperous democratic future. They also attended to the implicit dangers of the emerging socioeconomic order: both its intense individualism, which threatened all social allegiances, and conversely its repressive homogenising tendencies: the genesis of mass society decried by many observers in the nineteenth century, with the concomitant 'glorification of things' and commodities at the expense of their creators.<sup>36</sup> Their views on alienation and emancipation have implications over a wide range of recent debates on personal identity, group relations, and political culture.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV Religion

We have already alluded to the contrasting appreciations in our period of religion and its role as a mobilising or an intrinsically conservative force. While some of our subjects advocated a purely secular morality and defended staunchly anti-clerical positions, for others among them, religion appeared as a potentially emancipatory force. A progressive religion would confer legitimacy on people's power by stressing brotherhood and equality; or it would endow democracy with a sense of collective mission and a religiously sanctioned duty of striving for perfection. So conceived, religion would promote cohesion in the polity, reaching across social barriers to create a shared civic identity.

Conversely, many revolutionaries in 1848 repudiated religion for reinforcing hierarchy and irrational tradition, and for theologically bolstering claims of irresponsible rule. These included, particularly in the German lands, ideas of personal monarchical rule, on analogy with the divine government of the world. Related conservative evocations of a mystical, direct bond between king and people aimed to counter demands for popular sovereignty by precluding any 'mechanical' constitutional document which would be disruptive of this union.<sup>38</sup> In rejecting these views, revolutionaries advocated the rational justification of power and the autonomous use of reason, in resistance to state censorship and stultifying religious orthodoxies. They thus maintained the heritage of the

<sup>36</sup> Parry, 'Christian socialism'.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, trans. J. Golb, J. Ingram and C. Wilke (London: Verso, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> These issues are discussed in W. Breckman, 'Politics, religion, and personhood: The left Hegelians and the Christian German state', in Moggach (ed.), *Politics, Religion, and Art*, pp. 96–117; and in the same volume, C. Thornhill, 'Hegelianism and the politics of contingency', pp. 118–44.



Enlightenment and the French Revolution in applying standards of public reason and critical scrutiny, in the name of freedom, justice, and progress. These arguments have lost none of their currency. The battle against fundamentalisms and their political ramifications continues to be waged.

## V New Ideological Patterns: Republicanism and Its Fate, and the Emergence of Socialism

Finally, the 1848 period and its immediate aftermath produce a new and instantly recognisable configuration of modern political ideologies. On the one hand, republicanism adapted to the facts of modern social diversity, reframing the older republican narrative of a homogeneous citizenry,<sup>39</sup> recognising the consequences of the economic division of labour, and effecting a (partial) reconciliation with the market through a redefinition of virtue, while continuing to stress mechanisms of political direction of economic processes in the public interest.<sup>40</sup> The republican themes of self-mastery and resistance to domination were explicit among the subjects of our investigation, and were expressed in different registers, even when the author indicated no clear republican affiliation. Republican ideas of freedom were extended to economic as well as political questions, and there were attempts, often fragmentary, to work out a republican account of rights as participatory rather than exclusionary claims.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, the refurbished republicanism of 1848 had to confront an array of rival political positions. If republicanism remained a vital tradition in France, for example,<sup>42</sup> and persisted in various guises elsewhere, it also fragmented, giving rise to, or ceding its leading role to, alternative accounts of emancipation, citizenship, and the state.<sup>43</sup> The unresolved tension in the modern project between freedom and solidarity, identified by Hegel, was immediately manifest in 1848 in the split among republican, liberal, and socialist tendencies.<sup>44</sup> Each current

<sup>39</sup> E.g. S. Maza, 'The social imaginary of the revolution. The third estate, the national guard, and the absent bourgeoisie' in C. Jones and D. Wahrman (eds.), *The Age of Cultural Revolutions. Britain and France, 1750–1820* (Berkeley Calif.: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 106–23.

<sup>40</sup> I. Hont and M. Ignatieff (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>41</sup> Moggach, 'Republicans and socialists'. <sup>42</sup> Jones, 'French republicanism'.

<sup>43</sup> This is not to say that we take republicanism to be the direct progenitor of the liberalism that displaces it. The body of thought identified in the nineteenth century as liberalism has more distant, anti-republican antecedents. See Q. Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> Stedman Jones, 'Elusive signifiers'.



attained a more clearly defined ideological profile, heralding subsequent contentions on the social question and the relation of politics and economics, as well as on nationalism and internationalism. Of particular note in this volume is the emergence of socialism in its various configurations, and its proposals for redress of economic inequality, exploitation, and exclusion. The figure of Karl Marx is dominant, because his thought encompasses central questions of democracy, state, civil society, and religion,<sup>45</sup> but his own positions were successively defined in contention with other accounts of emancipated modernity. Marx's context and his specific interventions, especially as they bear on the revolutionary process itself, receive critical scrutiny here. Anarchism and conservatism too achieved self-conscious formulation in polemics with other currents in the mid-century. These debates, sharpened in the revolutionary experiences of 1848, are still definitive of the modern era.

This volume seeks to demonstrate the concreteness, variety, and currency of the thinking of the 1848 revolutionaries, of all complexions. This account offers no consoling narrative of progress, but rather reconstructs the difficult struggles for its advancement. If the results of the struggle are constantly subject to reversal, the struggles themselves recur; like the mole in Hegel's analogy, they gnaw their way back to the surface after being temporarily submerged. Without overstating the prescience or insight of any particular figure treated here, we can conclude that the collective effect of their reflections and actions in the critical period of 1848 and its wake is to herald the advent of democratic modernity, and to offer diagnoses of its possibilities and its problems. Their contentions against powerful adversaries, old and new, met with decisive checks, but nonetheless they set the agenda for the political programmes of the ensuing decades: despite the derision of their apparently triumphant opponents, they cannot be accounted a failure. Their optimism for the future, for the prospects of continuing progress in freedom and enlightenment, was in general tempered by a recognition of the dangers and limitations of modern culture. The revolutionaries of 1848, and those who immediately succeeded them, staked out a range of notable positions in political thought, and initiated debates which continue to resonate in our contemporary world. They posed questions of freedom, democracy, and modernity, whose urgency remains undiminished.

<sup>45</sup> Moggach, 'Republicans and socialists'; Siclován, '1848 and German socialism'; Stedman Jones, 'Elusive signifiers'.

# 1 Lamartine, the Girondins, and 1848

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*Jonathan Beecher*

No single individual more clearly epitomises the hopes, illusions, and confusions of February 1848 than Alphonse de Lamartine, the poet who became the leading figure in the provisional government created immediately after the overthrow of Louis-Philippe. At the time of the February Revolution Lamartine was fifty-eight years old. Ever since the publication in 1820 of his *Méditations Poétiques* he had enjoyed a reputation as one of France's greatest lyric poets. This little volume made Lamartine famous overnight; and for many readers he would always remain what he was for Flaubert's *Emma Bovary*: the elegiac poet of refined melancholy whose verses captured ineffable feelings and sad memories of lost loves.<sup>1</sup> But he later claimed that poetry was merely the distraction of his youth and that his true vocation was politics.

In turning from poetry to politics, Lamartine lost none of his romantic confidence in his own intuitions and continued to believe in the power of the word to enrich experience and to create new worlds. In 1834, in a long essay on 'the destinies of poetry', he wrote that the poet had a divine calling to guide a politics that had entered a new age. 'My conviction', he declared, 'is that we are at one of the great epochs of reconstruction and social renewal'. The political task was no longer to decide whether the nobility, the priesthood, or the bourgeoisie should rule France; it was to decide if the 'moral' and 'religious' idea of 'evangelical charity' would replace 'the idea of egoism in politics'. In accents similar to those of Shelley's not-yet-published 'Defence of Poetry', Lamartine asserted that the role poetry could play was to liberate individuals from commonplace expectations and to widen the bounds of the thinkable: 'to point the way towards utopias, imaginary republics and cities of God' and to inspire the courage to seek and attain such ideals.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Paris: Garnier, 1961), Part I, ch. 6, pp. 36–37.

<sup>2</sup> A. de Lamartine, 'Des destinées de la poésie' in *Oeuvres de Lamartine* (Bruxelles: Adolphe Wahlen, 1836), pp. 371, 373. See also G. A. Kelly, *The Humane Comedy: Constant, Tocqueville and French Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 187–89.

Elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1833, Lamartine kept his distance from existing factions and talked of founding his own 'parti social'. He was no socialist, for he had an unwavering belief in the sanctity of private property. But he recognised the necessity of state intervention 'to prevent wealth from being oppressive and poverty from being envious and revolutionary'. He was a critic of competition, which he called 'selfishness left to itself'; he feared the power of high finance, which he called the feudalism of money; and in February 1835 he warned the Chamber of Deputies that 'the question of the proletariat' could cause a 'terrible explosion'. When pressed to offer solutions, he almost always appealed to some notion of Christian charity. 'Let's have other peacemakers than our soldiers, other arguments than our bayonets', he told the Chamber of Deputies in his first major speech. 'Let's put charity into our laws.'<sup>3</sup>

By the 1840s Lamartine had come to identify himself with republican and democratic positions, and he took upon himself the task of simultaneously forging the vision of a new world in his speeches and embodying, in his own words, 'the voice of the people'.<sup>4</sup> In addressing the Chamber of Deputies he proudly described himself as 'a son of revolutions, born in their womb'.<sup>5</sup> But he lived the life of a *grand seigneur*, maintaining a splendid Parisian *hôtel* and large estates at Saint-Point and Monceau in addition to his childhood home in the village of Milly. He entertained grandly, kept nine horses, a dozen greyhounds, and a multitude of servants, and paid for the education of village children. Acquaintances were divided about him. Marie d'Agoult admired him but regretted that in literature and in life he never had to struggle to achieve success.<sup>6</sup> Others found him vain and self-centred, quick to claim knowledge that he did not possess. Tocqueville wrote that he had 'never met a mind more devoid of any thought of the public welfare' than Lamartine's, nor 'a mind that had a more thorough contempt for the truth'. And the liberal politician Charles de Rémusat described Lamartine as a man who 'thinks constantly of himself and only of himself'. 'Wake him suddenly from the deepest sleep, give him the most surprising news, or the most tragic, and he will

<sup>3</sup> A. de Lamartine 'Speech of 13 May 1834' in *La Politique et l'Histoire*, R. David (ed.), (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), p. 78. See also F. L'Huillier, *Lamartine en Politique* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1993), p. 179.

<sup>4</sup> For a fascinating, comprehensive, and fine-spun analysis of Lamartine's oratory see D. Dupart, *Le Lyrisme Démocratique, ou la Naissance de l'Éloquence Romantique chez Lamartine, 1834–1849* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Speech of 24 March 1840 in A. de Lamartine, *La France Parlementaire (1834–1851): Œuvres Oratoires et Écrits Politiques*, Louis Ulbach (ed.), 6 vols. (Librairie Internationale, 1864), vol. II, p. 318.

<sup>6</sup> D. Stern [Marie d'Agoult], *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, 3 vols. (Paris: Sandré, 1850–1853), vol. I, p. 16.

think of only one thing: the role he might be called upon to play.’<sup>7</sup> For Rémusat, Lamartine was ‘a dangerous man’.

## I

By the early 1840s Lamartine found that the well of poetic inspiration had begun to run dry and that his poetry was no longer selling. This created problems for him because, as a man of extravagant tastes who lived beyond his means, he depended on the sale of his books to stay out of bankruptcy. By 1843 his debts were estimated at 1,200,000 francs. To get out of debt Lamartine decided to change genres and to write a history of the French Revolution aimed at a wide audience. He began work in August 1843. Two years later, after a lawsuit and lengthy negotiations with several publishers, he signed a lucrative contract with Balzac’s publisher, Furne. Finally, between 20 March and 19 June 1847 the *Histoire des Girondins* appeared in eight volumes and 3,000 pages. Lamartine was no historian, and reviewers had an easy time pointing out his errors, contradictions, and omissions. Both Michelet’s and Louis Blanc’s histories of the French Revolution, which began to appear just prior to Lamartine’s, were grounded in a much deeper knowledge of the sources, events, and leaders of the revolution. But neither work received anything like the enthusiastic response given to the *Histoire des Girondins*. Lamartine’s language was sumptuous, and readers like the novelist and *salonnière* Delphine de Girardin delighted in ‘the felicity of his expressions’ and ‘the sonorousness of his language’.<sup>8</sup>

The verdict of posterity has been less enthusiastic. Today Lamartine’s *Histoire des Girondins* is best remembered for the sardonic one-liners it inspired: for Tocqueville’s comment that Lamartine’s ‘crude colours besmirched every imagination’; for Chateaubriand’s expression of surprise that Lamartine should have wished to ‘gild the guillotine’; and for Alexandre Dumas’ statement that Lamartine had ‘raised history to the dignity of the novel’. (The characterisation of the *Histoire des Girondins* as a ‘novel’ was to be repeated dozens of times, but Dumas was the only person who meant it as a compliment!) More generally, after the February Revolution, Lamartine’s book was seen by many as having ‘caused’ or ‘set the stage for’ the fall of the July Monarchy. Marie d’Agoult wrote that the *Histoire des Girondins* ‘had a kind of electric reverberation throughout all

<sup>7</sup> A. de Tocqueville, *Souvenirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), p. 112; C. de Rémusat, *Mémoires de ma vie*, C. Pouthas (ed.), 5 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1958–1967), vol. IV, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> E. de Girardin, ‘Lettres parisiennes du Vicomte de Launay’ in *Œuvres Complètes de Madame Émile de Girardin, née Delphine Gay*, 6 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1860–1861), vol. V, p. 438.

of France'. It was one of the most decisive of the 'immediate causes' of the Revolution of 1848 'in reviving suddenly, by a magical gift of evocation, the shades of the heroes and martyrs of '89 and '93, whose grandeur seemed a silent reproach to our pettiness and whose ardent convictions disturbed our sleep and put our inertia to shame'. Victor Hugo was (for once) more succinct: he wrote that the 'lively and eloquent' *Histoire des Girondins* 'taught revolution to France'.<sup>9</sup>

So widespread was the belief of contemporaries that Lamartine's book was in some way responsible for the outbreak of revolution in France that it comes as a shock actually to read the book. The *Histoire des Girondins* is a historical melodrama which rivals Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* and Carlyle's *French Revolution* in the attention paid to popular violence and surpasses them in its emphasis on mindless violence. It's a melodrama in which images of 'jeunes et beaux' victims of the Terror alternate with portraits of vicious revolutionaries ranging from Marat, the personification of the 'fury' of the suffering and inarticulate masses, to Antoine Simon, the brutal prison guard and torturer of the dauphin at the Temple.

When the occasion demands, Lamartine invents speeches and imagines poignant scenes for his protagonists, for Louis XVI at Varennes, for Vergniaud at the imaginary 'last banquet' of the Girondins, and even for Robespierre on the night of the September massacres. And he lingers on the executions, repeatedly tracing the route taken by the tumbrils carrying the condemned from the *Conciergerie* to the Place de la Révolution. He says the historian must have pity, but his pity is generally deployed in support of royalists, starting with the well-meaning, inarticulate Louis XVI and the long-suffering Marie-Antoinette, 'légère dans la prospérité, sublime dans l'infortune, intrépide sur l'échafaud'.<sup>10</sup> And the most unambiguously positive portrait in the whole book is that of the chaste, angelic Charlotte Corday, whose physical beauty, together with 'the celestial beauty of her love of country', makes her a 'Jeanne d'Arc de la liberté'.<sup>11</sup>

Among the revolutionaries, two of the most positive figures, Mirabeau and Danton, are both presented as deeply flawed: Mirabeau, who gave the revolution 'form, passion, and a language', had 'sold himself' to the monarchy. And Danton, in whom the 'the heart of France' was beating,

<sup>9</sup> De Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, p.63; Chateaubriand in H. Guillemin, *Lamartine et la Question Sociale* (Paris: Plon, 1946), p.161; A. Dumas in A. Court, *Les Girondins de Lamartine*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Roure, 1988–1990), vol. I, p. 83; Stern, *Révolution de 1848*, vol. I, pp. 13–14; V. Hugo and H. Juin (ed.) *Choses Vues. Souvenirs, Journaux, Cahiers, 1830–1885* (Paris: Gallimard Quarto, 2002), p. 517.

<sup>10</sup> A. de Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins*, J-P Jacques (ed.), 2 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1984), vol. II, p. 505.

<sup>11</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins*, vol. II, p. 389.

had everything required of a citizen except for the one thing that really mattered: virtue. Lamartine notes the energy and conviction of the *Montagnards* but dwells on their weakness and limitations; and except for Madame Roland and Condorcet and (sometimes) Vergniaud, the Girondins are treated critically as lightweights and ‘intriguers’. Insofar as the book has a hero, it is not Vergniaud nor any of the Girondins but rather Robespierre, who is presented as engaged in his last months in a desperate struggle to contain the radical forces that he himself has done so much to unleash.

Why then were the Girondins interesting to Lamartine? Why did he call his book the *Histoire des Girondins*? The short answer is that when Lamartine chose the title in August 1843, his original plan was to focus on the period running from the opening of the Legislative Assembly (1 October 1791) to the exclusion of the Girondins from the Convention (2 June 1793).<sup>12</sup> The more illuminating answer is that for Lamartine the Girondins were negative models. They were revolutionary rhetoricians for whom politics was a matter of public gesture and private intrigue carried on ‘in the interest of the lettered middle class to which they belonged’. They were ‘men imbued with the republican ideas of antiquity, when the liberty of citizens presupposed the slavery of the masses and when the republics were so many aristocracies’. No wonder then that the Girondins ‘had a poor understanding of the Christian genius of the democratic republics of the future’.<sup>13</sup>

The Girondins were also weak and inconsistent. They pushed for a declaration of war in the mistaken belief that it would purge the body politic and consolidate their power. They played a leading role in the overthrow of the monarchy, but they were incapable of establishing a viable republic. And during their months in power, they repeatedly compromised their principles in return for tactical gains that proved to be worthless. They voted for the execution of the king because they wrongly thought that this would gain them popular support. Like Pontius Pilate, they handed over the monarchy to the people without being convinced of its vices and handed over the king to the Jacobins without being convinced of his criminality.<sup>14</sup> Even at the end, on trial for their lives, they failed to confess to the ‘glorious crime’ of having wished to moderate the revolution but tried instead to defend themselves with individual arguments. ‘They only became great after having lost all hope.’<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Court, *Girondins de Lamartine*, vol. I, pp. 63, 197–200.

<sup>13</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins*, vol. I, p. 772.

<sup>14</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins*, vol. II, p. 113. <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

But what about Robespierre? Why was *he* important to Lamartine? In what ways can he be described as the 'hero' of the *Histoire des Girondins*? Here the most important point is that Lamartine's Robespierre is a man of order. What he dreamed of was not the 'permanent agitation in the streets' that Danton wanted but rather 'the calm and orderly reign of the people personified by its representatives'.<sup>16</sup> Far from being bloodthirsty, he was disturbed by the popular violence encouraged by Hébert and Chaumette and the Commune de Paris. Lamartine imagines a Robespierre 'tortured by the massacres of September' and as someone who saw the imposition of the legal terror as a means of ending the popular and spontaneous terror. But Lamartine's portrayal of a non-violent Robespierre does not stop there. He represents Robespierre as having doubts, or second thoughts, about the execution of Marie-Antoinette, the Girondins, Danton, and many others, though not the violent *Hébertistes*.

In writing the *Histoire des Girondins* Lamartine was much concerned with the lessons that might be drawn by contemporaries from the French Revolution. He put it this way at the outset of the book: 'I am undertaking to write the history of a small number of men who, thrown by Providence into the midst of the greatest drama of modern times, epitomise the ideas, the passions, the errors, the virtues of the times . . . This history [which is] full of blood and tears is also full of lessons for the people.'<sup>17</sup> What then were the lessons to be learned from Lamartine's history?

The first, clearly, was the need to take up once again the work of 1789; to promote democratic ideas and to establish a more lasting republic than the Republic of 1791, which the Girondins did so much to make and to compromise. In writing the book Lamartine was consciously focusing the minds of contemporaries on one of the possible outcomes of the gathering political crisis in July Monarchy France: on the overthrow of the monarchy and on the possibilities and problems inherent in republican government.

But if Lamartine wanted to rehabilitate the French Revolution, his book was also clearly a warning against its 'excesses' and a plea to separate revolution and terror. He was, in a nutshell, arguing for a *moderate* republic, which he saw as the strongest bulwark against anarchy and popular violence. And he believed that this argument could best be made by depicting the violence of the revolution in all its horror. Lamartine said all of this and more in letters to friends. To Molé, for example: 'Don't read my [book]. It's written for the people. They are going to play a great role. We must prepare them, make them loathe violence so that the next

<sup>16</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins*, vol. I, p. 469.    <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.



revolution may be pure of the excesses of the first one. It is my duty to prepare the people, to prepare myself, because I will be the man of a new society.’<sup>18</sup>

## II

What is remarkable is that for three months in 1848 Lamartine did in fact play the role for which he had prepared himself. From February to May he was the most influential man in France. In the first days of the revolution he ensured the rejection of an Orléanist regency, secured the adoption of the republican tri-coloured flag, drafted a decree for the abolition of the death penalty, and committed France to a non-interventionist foreign policy. The moderate republic that emerged from the February Revolution owed more to his efforts than to those of any other individual.

Through all this he enjoyed a kind of popularity that had few precedents in the history of French political culture. An admiring crowd accompanied him home on the evening of 25 February and refused to disperse. On 26 February admirers mobbed him as he left the Hôtel de Ville; and on 27 February he escaped the crowd only by taking refuge in Victor Hugo’s house on the Place des Vosges. In the days that followed, the erection of a column in his honour was suggested for the Place de la Concorde, and glowing tributes appeared in the legitimist *Le Correspondant*, the moderate republican *Le National*, and the Fourierist *Démocratie Pacifique*.<sup>19</sup> This was only the beginning. For the next two months Lamartine was celebrated in newspapers and journals of all political persuasions (except the extreme left) for keeping the revolution on a moderate course. His apotheosis came on 23 April with the elections for a National Assembly. The electoral system adopted, *scrutin de liste départemental*, meant that votes were counted by department. There were no residential requirements, and no limit was placed on multiple candidatures, with the result that Lamartine’s name was placed on the ballot in eleven different departments. The turnout was massive: 84 per cent of the eligible voters actually cast ballots. Lamartine was elected in ten departments, receiving a total of 1,283,501 votes, a total far greater than that received by any other candidate.<sup>20</sup>

What was the basis of Lamartine’s extraordinary success in the April elections? He was widely seen as the most prominent moderate

<sup>18</sup> J. Lucas-Dubreton, *Lamartine* (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), p. 228.

<sup>19</sup> V. Considerant, *Le Socialisme devant le Vieux Monde* (Paris: Librairie Phalanstérienne, 1848), p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> For details see W. Fortescue, *Alphonse de Lamartine: A Political Biography* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 164–65.



republican within the Provisional Government. But his main support came not only from moderate republicans, who favoured democratic political changes, but also from conservatives, who believed that Lamartine would exert a powerful restraining influence on democratic and socialist radicals. As Tocqueville put it: 'To all of those whom the revolution harmed or frightened', Lamartine appeared 'as a saviour'. 'They were expecting him to put himself unhesitatingly at their head in order to attack and destroy the socialists.'<sup>21</sup> Lamartine understood this. When Caussidière urged him to get rid of the moderates in the Provisional Government, he replied: 'The 1,500,000 votes that I have just received were given to me only because I offered guarantees of peace and order.'<sup>22</sup> But here lay a problem that Lamartine himself was slow to recognise. If he owed his electoral success largely to the fears of conservatives, these fears were greatly reduced by the outcome of the elections. For despite Lamartine's personal triumph, the elections were above all a triumph, not for the moderate republicans but for the conservative *notables* who had traditionally dominated French society. According to the figures compiled by Frederick de Luna, the representatives elected in April included seventy-five nobles or former peers and 439 former monarchists, as opposed to just fifty-five radicals and socialists and 231 moderate republicans.<sup>23</sup> What this suggests is that after 23 April the check provided by Lamartine against radicals and socialists was no longer necessary to conservatives.

Prior to the elections, some conservatives already had doubts about Lamartine. His behaviour on the murky *journées* of 17 March and 16 April had raised questions in the minds of both monarchists and moderate republicans about where his real sympathies lay. After the huge popular demonstration of 17 March calling for the postponement of the elections, Lamartine met individually with leading radicals including Blanqui, Barbès, Cabet, and Raspail, and he gave help to Sobrier's radical *Club des Clubs*.<sup>24</sup> A month later, as radicals planned a second demonstration, Lamartine sent agents to their clubs to try to moderate their activities; and on 15 April he summoned Auguste Blanqui to the Foreign Ministry at dawn for a second private meeting, which lasted three hours. He was apparently trying (successfully as it turned out) to dissuade Blanqui from participating in the demonstration. But to conservatives it seemed that

<sup>21</sup> Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, p.111.

<sup>22</sup> M. Caussidière, *Mémoires de Caussidière*, 2 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1849), vol. II, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> F. A. de Luna, *The French Republic under Cavaignac, 1848* (Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 107–13.

<sup>24</sup> Fortescue, *Lamartine*, p.159.

Lamartine was playing a double game, and he was soon accused of having 'conspired' with Blanqui and Sobrier.<sup>25</sup>

The suspicions of the right were reinforced in early May by Lamartine's insistence that Ledru-Rollin be included in the Executive Commission that replaced the Provisional Government after the meeting of the new National Assembly. Many conservatives found it hard to interpret Lamartine's support of Ledru-Rollin as anything other than a self-interested political calculation. They saw it as an attempt to guarantee his political future in case the left gained power, or as an attempt to get republican support in a possible presidential campaign. There is, however, much evidence to suggest that Lamartine was genuinely committed to the idea that the 'concorde' of widely diverse factions was the only foundation on which a lasting republic could be built. As he told a deputation on 19 March: 'Previous republics were in effect, partisan republics; we want this republic to be the republic of the entire nation.'<sup>26</sup>

Lamartine's problem, in the increasingly polarised political landscape of May and June 1848, was, as William Fortescue has put it in his excellent political biography, that he never stopped trying 'to be popular among all classes, satisfy practically every shade of opinion, and win the support of nearly all political groups'. He attempted simultaneously to please the radical Joseph Sobrier and the conservative British aristocrat Lord Normanby. On 16 April he welcomed National Guardsmen, who were shouting 'Death to the Communists! Death to Cabet!', but the next day he offered Cabet and his wife refuge in his Paris apartment. Likewise he was constantly at odds with Louis Blanc, but at a Provisional Government meeting on 19 April he vigorously opposed Blanc's arrest. 'Altogether', Fortescue concludes, Lamartine 'was continually labouring to achieve a general reconciliation'. This desire to win the approval of both the salons and the revolutionary clubs accorded with his belief in social *fraternité* and political harmony.<sup>27</sup> But it compromised him in the eyes of the Party of Order.

Lamartine was further compromised by his inability to contain popular unrest on 15 May. On that day, a debate was scheduled in the National Assembly on the question of French intervention in support of Polish independence. A march on the Assembly was organised to deliver a petition in behalf of the Poles. But this turned into an attempt to overthrow the newly elected government. The Assembly was invaded by

<sup>25</sup> H. Guillemin, *Lamartine en 1848* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), pp. 46–8; Stern, *Révolution de 1848*, vol. II, pp. 161–63; L'Huillier, *Lamartine en Politique*, pp. 186–87, 193.

<sup>26</sup> *Le Moniteur Universel*, 20 March 1848, p. 644, in Fortescue, *Lamartine*, p. 172.

<sup>27</sup> For the whole paragraph see Fortescue, *Lamartine*, pp. 172–73.

a large crowd, and in the ensuing chaos a radical orator named Aloysius Huber, who was subsequently shown to have been employed as a police spy during the July Monarchy, got control of the rostrum and shouted at the top of his lungs: 'Citizens, the National Assembly is dissolved!' After more confusion the crowd poured out of the Assembly and the insurgents headed for the Hôtel de Ville, the traditional setting for the proclamation of revolutionary governments. Few actually reached the Hôtel de Ville though, for they were intercepted by troops from the National Guard. The Guard rapidly surrounded the Assembly and arrested the remaining insurgents as well as others whose principal crime was to be known as prominent figures on the left.

The abortive insurrection of 15 May played so nicely into the hands of the reaction that it has been argued that the whole thing was a trap: in Henri Guillemin's words, 'a well-executed police operation'.<sup>28</sup> However that may be, 15 May compromised the radical left and got many of its leaders arrested. By nightfall Barbès, Albert, and Raspail were in police custody; Blanqui was in hiding; and Louis Blanc had been deeply compromised. Lamartine was not implicated in the coup. But 15 May was not a good day for him either. After trying unsuccessfully to calm the unrest in the Assembly, he disappeared. Later he was recognised and cheered by soldiers and guardsmen. This caused him to believe that his reputation would emerge untarnished from this episode.<sup>29</sup> He was wrong.

In fact, the whole Executive Commission had lost the confidence of the Assembly, and Lamartine was now regarded with suspicion by many leaders of the Party of Order. 'You cannot imagine', wrote Thiers to Bugeaud, 'all the vile tricks, the stupid intrigues, and the double games that Monsieur de Lamartine is up to.'<sup>30</sup> The *Revue des Deux Mondes* shed crocodile tears over the spectacle of Lamartine's loss of the prestige that he had enjoyed in February before 'turning his back' on 'reasonable people'.<sup>31</sup> On 22 May Xavier Marmier summed up the feelings of many conservatives when he noted in his journal: 'We need a leader. M. de Lamartine could have been this leader, but his alliance with Ledru-Rollin and his inexplicable attitude toward recent events have cost him his popularity.'<sup>32</sup> The collapse of Lamartine's support in the National Assembly became evident on 12 June, when he attempted to speak

<sup>28</sup> H. Guillemin, *La Première Résurrection de la République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), p. 352.

<sup>29</sup> L'Huillier, *Lamartine en Politique*, p. 192; Guillemin, *Lamartine en 1848*, p. 64, and pp. 62–65 for a comprehensive account of Lamartine's role on 15 May.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Guillemin, *Lamartine en 1848*, p. 65.

<sup>31</sup> *Revue des Deux Mondes* in L'Huillier, *Lamartine en Politique*, p. 193.

<sup>32</sup> X. Marmier, *Journal: 1848–1890*, 2 vols, edited by E. Kaye (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1968), p. 110.

about the danger represented by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's victory in the by-elections of 4 June. The Assembly was much more interested in attacking Lamartine than in listening to his warning about Louis-Napoleon. Hecklers interrupted him to shout out the names of radicals with whom he was accused of conspiring. 'Yes, no doubt', replied Lamartine, 'I conspired with these men, I conspired with Sobrier, I conspired with Blanqui, I conspired with several other people. Do you know how I conspired? I conspired the way a lightning rod conspires with lightning!'<sup>33</sup> The image was striking. But it was lost on the Assembly.

What brought matters to a head was the question of the National Workshops. By early June it was evident that the leaders of the National Assembly were determined to liquidate the Workshops. Lamartine wished that arrangements could be made to give the dismissed workers some means of supporting themselves. But a majority in the Assembly, led by Falloux, were determined that the liquidation of the Workshops should take place without delay, whatever the consequences might be. Not surprisingly, once the termination of the Workshops was announced on 22 June, barricades began to rise in the working-class quarters of Paris.

There was nothing in Paris' past to equal the ferocity of the fighting that marked the workers' revolt that began on 23 June. The June Days were all over by noon of 26 June, but in the course of those four days a battle was fought in the streets of Paris that left at least 4,000 dead and culminated with the arrest of some 15,000 insurgents. The June Days left a scar on the memory of almost everyone who lived through them. One reason for this was the sheer magnitude of the event. Some 50,000 men and women, the whole of eastern Paris it seemed, took up arms against the government; and the force deployed against them was at least twice as large. What made the June insurrection unforgettable, though, was what almost all contemporaries took to be its class character. It was not a conflict between opposing political factions; it was, in Tocqueville's words, 'the revolt of one whole section of the population against another'.<sup>34</sup> As such, it made a mockery of the hope, which Lamartine shared with many others of his time, that the Second French Republic could transcend class divisions to become 'everybody's government'.

If the June Days marked the end of the dream of a republic of fraternity and concord, they also marked the end of Lamartine's prominence in French public life. On 23 June, the first day of the insurrection and Lamartine's last full day in power, a conflict arose between the Executive Commission and General Eugène Cavaignac, who had been

<sup>33</sup> M. Toesca, *Lamartine ou l'Amour de la Vie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1969), p. 451.

<sup>34</sup> Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, p. 136.

appointed commander of the government troops in Paris that morning. The Executive Commission wanted every barricade to be attacked as soon as it was built. Cavaignac wanted to wait until the revolt was fully developed and only then to unleash a massive attack on the insurgents. Cavaignac's strategy, which in the end would lead to much higher casualties, meant that there was little actual fighting on 23 June. But Lamartine, who with his fellow members of the Executive Commission was still nominally in charge, felt that he had to do something. That evening around 6 pm, accompanied by two *représentants du peuple* and a minister, he rode on horseback to the Boulevard du Temple and tried to talk with the insurgents manning the barricades there. He might have been shot, and he later claimed that at that moment he imagined a martyr's death for himself.<sup>35</sup> But when the insurgents recognised him, they put down their arms. He appealed to them to give up the fight, which they refused to do. When he returned home, his secretary described him as 'overwhelmed, pale and defeated'.<sup>36</sup>

The following day, 24 June, the National Assembly voted to declare a state of siege and to give absolute power to General Cavaignac. With this the Executive Commission lost its *raison d'être*, and Lamartine had no alternative but to resign. Henceforth he was only a citizen and one of 900 *représentants du peuple*. But he suffered from more than a loss of status. As his biographer Maurice Toesca has written, 'The June days broke Lamartine's will.'<sup>37</sup>

### III

Visitors to Lamartine in July reported that he was passive and fatalistic but not without hope. He and his wife had retired to the outskirts of Paris, renting a villa called Castel-Madrid in the Bois de Boulogne. When the Russian mystic Madame Swetchine visited him there, she found him unaccountably 'calm, serene, confident in the future', not only the country's future but his own as well. She didn't know whether to attribute this to pride or illusion. For he was now blamed for everything that went wrong from February to June: for the failure to maintain law and order in Paris, for the 45 per cent increase in property taxes, and for the ongoing economic crisis. In July he had to testify before a commission of inquiry investigating the *journée* of 15 May and the June insurrection. He was also

<sup>35</sup> A. de Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, 2 vols. (Paris: Perrotin, 1849), vol. II, p. 484.

<sup>36</sup> Toesca, *Lamartine ou l'Amour de la Vie*, p. 455; Guillemin, *Lamartine en 1848*, pp. 75–79.

<sup>37</sup> Toesca, *Lamartine ou l'Amour de la Vie*, p. 456.

obliged to defend his conduct of foreign policy before the Assembly's foreign affairs committee.<sup>38</sup>

Forced repeatedly to justify his conduct of affairs, Lamartine took his case to the public with a pamphlet addressed to the voters in the departments that had elected him in April. In this pamphlet (completed 25 August) he responded to attacks on his personal ambition, his radical sympathies, and his weakness in defence of law and order. He argued that the proclamation of the Second Republic had been essential for the maintenance of order and that he had done everything possible to limit violence and anarchy.<sup>39</sup> In his own politics Lamartine moved to the right after June. He broke decisively with Ledru-Rollin and developed a more critical view of France's revolutionary tradition. He continued to think of himself as a moderate republican. But he believed that France had more to fear from continuing popular unrest than from military dictatorship or Bonapartism. Thus he presented himself as someone who had saved France from a new Terror and the dictatorship of the Paris clubs.<sup>40</sup>

In September Lamartine returned to public life. He participated actively in the National Assembly's debate over the constitution, arguing for a single-chamber legislature and a strong, popularly elected executive. France needed a strong president, he argued, a president who could stand apart from the Assembly and pursue an independent course. Did Lamartine take this view because he had not yet abandoned his own presidential aspirations? Possibly. Some of his enemies, such as Falloux, suspected as much. What is beyond doubt is that Lamartine's speeches in support of the popular election of the president helped set the stage for the election of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the eventual overthrow of the Second Republic.<sup>41</sup>

In October, on returning to Mâcon at the end of the legislative session, Lamartine got caught up in a round of receptions, dinners, speeches, and visits, and his continuing local popularity seems to have convinced him that he still had a role to play on the national stage. Thus he allowed himself to become a candidate in the presidential elections to be held in December. But his candidacy was curiously half-hearted. He refused to issue a programme or manifesto, and he repeatedly insisted that he did not want the presidency and would accept it only out of a sense of duty.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For this paragraph see Fortescue, *Lamartine*, p. 240.

<sup>39</sup> 'Lettre aux dix départements' in A. de Lamartine, *Trois Mois au Pouvoir* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1848).

<sup>40</sup> Fortescue, *Lamartine*, p. 244. <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 241–43.

<sup>42</sup> See 'Lamartine to Monsieur de Marcellus', 1 November 1848, in H. Guillemin (ed.), A. de Lamartine, *Lettres Inédites: 1821–1851* (Geneva: Porrentruy, 1944), p. 94.

By the end of November it was clear, probably even to him, that he would not be called upon. But he could not bring himself to withdraw.

The night before the presidential election Lamartine had dinner with friends at the Restaurant Véry in the Palais Royal. He was recognised by passers-by and a crowd gathered. When he left the restaurant, they burst into spontaneous applause. A few days later Lamartine described, not without pride, the incident to his niece Valentine. But that evening, as the first results were published, it became clear that he would receive only a pitiful handful of votes. He wrote to his niece that he felt 'an unspeakable joy' and that he had 'feared the presidency more than death itself'. Perhaps he meant it. But he could not contain himself from inveighing in the next line against 'the darkest, stupidest and most universal ingratitude' on the part of 'the bourgeoisie and the nobility whom I have shielded with my body for three months on end and whom I alone have saved'.<sup>43</sup>

On 20 December René Waldeck-Rousseau announced the results of the vote to the National Assembly. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte had won 5,534,520 votes. His nearest rival, Eugène Cavaignac (for whom Lamartine had voted) received 1,448,302. Ledru-Rollin, the candidate of the left, received 371,431, and Raspail got a smattering of votes. After them came Lamartine, who received a grand total of 17,914 votes. Victor Hugo noted in his journal that when Lamartine's total was read out, the representatives on the right 'burst out laughing'.<sup>44</sup>

Although he claimed not to care, Lamartine was bitterly disappointed by the result of the vote. He felt humiliated and betrayed by those who had hailed him as a saviour in February. He was apparently offered a post in Louis-Napoleon's government, but this did not interest him. He did try, however, to play some role in politics through political journalism. In April 1849 he began to publish a monthly journal called *Le Conseiller du Peuple*, which sought to 'enlighten, moderate, instruct and advise' the literate but poorly educated masses. This gave him the opportunity to try his hand at writing fiction for ordinary working people. He also wrote a monthly political editorial in which, assuming the voice of 'a simple citizen', he celebrated 'the people' and inveighed against 'the men of faction and violence' who 'wanted to impose on us . . . a partisan, vengeful, expropriating and bloody republic, along with the red flag'. Although

<sup>43</sup> 'Lamartine to Valentine de Cessiat', 12 December 1848, in Marquis de Luppé, *Les Travaux et les Jours de Alphonse de Lamartine* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948), p. 379.

<sup>44</sup> Fortescue *Lamartine*, pp. 247–8. I follow Fortescue for the numbers, taken from *Le Moniteur Universel* for 22 December. The numbers read out to the Assembly were slightly different.



never highly popular, this journal had a modest success, its circulation rising from 5,000 in April 1849 to 40,000 in October 1850.<sup>45</sup>

In the parliamentary elections of May 1849 Lamartine ran on a conservative ticket and lost. Thus for the first time since 1833 he had no role at all in national political life. He won back his seat in the by-elections of July and remained in the Assembly for the next two years. But his main concern after his fall from power was the writing of a book that would tell his story of the Revolution of 1848 and justify the role he played in it.

#### IV

Lamartine wrote the *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848* in just a few months. During his four months in power he had had no time to take notes, and when he sat down to write at his rented villa in the Bois de Boulogne, he had few sources to work with apart from his memories and copies of his speeches and reports. But this hardly mattered to him. He knew that other histories of 1848 were on the way – Marie d'Agoult, Léonard Gallois, Elias Regnault, Charles Robin, and Alfred Delvau were all at work – and he wanted to get his book out before theirs. (In fact, his was the first major history of 1848 to appear.) Of course, he wanted to explain himself and to justify his role. But he still hoped that his political career was not over. If the French only understood how much he had done for them, he believed that he might be called back to a position of leadership. Thus he was generous in his comments about everyone who might be in a position to help him make a political comeback. Thus too he had no desire to make a definitive judgement as to the final significance of 1848. He preferred to regard the Second French Republic as a work in progress.

In writing his history of the Revolution of 1848, then, Lamartine chose not to see the revolution as a failure, and chose not to write in the tragic or pathetic mode that many later historians of the Second Republic would adopt. He had been marginalised after June, and his half-hearted presidential candidacy in December had made him an object of ridicule in the eyes of many. But he himself saw things differently. In telling his story of 1848 he focused on his dream of a moderate republic and his effort to give substance to that dream by channelling the energies of 'the people' in constructive directions. He believed that this effort had not been irretrievably compromised by the June insurrection. It was simply necessary to repeat again and again the story of his own successful efforts to reach out to the people, to guide them, and to speak for them. There were 'lessons'

<sup>45</sup> *Conseiller du Peuple*, vol. I, pp. 1, 16, 250.



to be learned from his three months in power, and the first of these lessons concerned the need to find peaceful, non-violent means of breaking down the barriers that separated 'the people' from the educated elite in France.

This said, the fact remains that Lamartine's *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848* is a very strange book. This is not because he takes positions that are in themselves odd or surprising. What is strange is the odd disparity between the book's form and its content. It purports to be a history of 1848; in fact, it is a self-congratulatory memoir. The central figure is Lamartine himself, and episodes in which he does not appear, or plays a modest role, are given short shrift. Half the book, the whole first volume, is devoted to the first three days of the revolution when Lamartine was at the centre of events, but in treating the period after his fall from power he quickly loses interest. The June Days receive only cursory treatment, and the book concludes with Lamartine's last official act as a member of the Executive Commission on 24 June. Thus it is a highly personal history, but at the same time it is written from an Olympian perspective. The author situates himself above the fray and refers to 'Lamartine' always in the third person, which creates an oddly comic effect in passages describing Lamartine's feats of bravery and his brilliant oratory. In his narrative of 25 February he pictures himself speaking, 'his clothing torn, his head bare, his forehead covered with sweat', as he wins over the crowd to the tricolour flag. He records speeches that 'Lamartine' might have given, and he traces the process whereby 'the name of Lamartine' acquired 'a sort of inviolability' in the eyes and ears of the people of Paris.<sup>46</sup>

In a somewhat embarrassed preface, Lamartine acknowledges the disparity between his desire to write history in 'the lapidary and impersonal style of the Greeks and Romans' and his focus on 'the personal role that I played in events'. Perhaps, he admits, he was wrong to call this work a 'history'. He claims that only when he was half-way through the first volume did he recognise the problem, but by then it was too late to adopt a more familiar mode of writing.<sup>47</sup> The text actually includes a number of the same stylistic and rhetorical features that marked the *Histoire des Girondins*: the remarkable pictorial sense; the impressive *tableaux* of great moments; the use of oceanic metaphors to describe the 'storm-tossed', 'sinking', and even 'drowning' members of the Provisional Government and the 'flood', the 'tides', the 'torrents', the 'undulations', and the 'waves' of the crowd as it 'inundated' the Place de Grève.<sup>48</sup> What

<sup>46</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. I, pp. 201–4, 385–86; vol. II, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Préface', unpaginated.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 214, 251, 253–55, 284, 313, 336, 359, 388; vol. II, p. 206.

is most surprising about the *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, however, is the contrast between the vividness of the language and ineptness of Lamartine's attempts at explanation. Why the failure of the effort to build a moderate republic? Why his own rapid loss of popularity? He really can't tell us. Why the surge of support for Louis-Napoleon in the spring and summer of 1848? The only explanation that Lamartine gives is that the name of Napoléon was popular in France.<sup>49</sup>

One of the most striking features of Lamartine's book is the theatrical character of the writing. The metaphor of the theatre, so prevalent in much of the commentary on 1848, is not especially prominent. But Lamartine does offer the careful description of décors and clothing, succinct sketches of the actors (minor as well as major), long extracts from speeches (usually his own), snatches of dialogue, and dramatic confrontations. Many scenes are played out in half-darkness: such as the initial meeting of the Provisional Government during which the atmosphere inside the Hôtel de Ville is 'thickened' by the smoke from gas lamps and the candles give off a 'sinister' light.<sup>50</sup> As for the character sketches, they are done with stylish ostentation: Lamartine's language is studded with balanced phrases and elegant epigrams that call attention to the cleverness of the writer. But the net effect is often bland and cloying. Thus of Louis-Philippe he writes: 'La nature avait fait ce prince probe et modéré: l'exile et l'expérience l'avait fait politique' ('Nature made this prince honest and moderate; exile and experience made him shrewd'). And we learn that Crémieux was 'le conseiller attendri de la duchesse d'Orléans le matin, de la République le soir' ('the tender advisor of the Duchess of Orléans in the morning, and of the Republic at night'). Unlike Tocqueville, whose most wicked comments were reserved for his political allies, Lamartine saved most of his criticism for those with whom he did not agree, but there again the criticism is often banal and vague. Of Louis Blanc, for example, he writes: 'Le cœur de Louis Blanc éclatait en sentiments fraternels, sa parole en images, mais son système en ténèbres' ('The heart of Louis Blanc erupted with fraternal sentiments, his speech with images, but his system with darkness').<sup>51</sup>

The blandness and banality of Lamartine's judgements surely derived in part from his desire to write history in the decorous and 'somewhat solemn manner of antiquity'. He did not want to debase himself by attacking his contemporaries or discussing their peccadillos. Nor did he wish to make enemies who might hinder a possible political comeback.

<sup>49</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. II, p. 46.

<sup>50</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. I, p. 299.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 7, 239; vol. II, p. 60.

Thus he flatters almost all his colleagues, sometimes with what one critic describes as 'dithyrambic exaggeration'.<sup>52</sup> All the members of the Provisional Government (including Louis Blanc!) are talented, well meaning, incorruptible, and even handsome. Armand Marrast is perhaps 'less well endowed by nature', but his wit, eloquence, and good heart compensate for his physical shortcomings. Under a rustic exterior, Ferdinand Flocon possesses 'a heart incapable of yielding to fear, but always ready to give way to pity'. Odilon Barrot is 'the Lafayette of 1848', whose 'character, of an undisputed purity, sometimes weakened by compromises and by indecision but never by a hard heart, made him a serious and almost [!] inviolable idol of the people'. Even Adolphe Thiers, whom Lamartine detested, is described as a 'mordant and witty speaker' and as 'the soul, the intelligence, and the word' of the dynastic opposition.<sup>53</sup>

The historian Jules Gesztesi has observed that in writing history Lamartine was 'not a judge but rather a priest who grants absolution'. Similar observations were made by contemporary reviewers, such as the Orléanist Eugène Forcade, who derided Lamartine's addiction to fulsome praise: 'You get sick of this insipid and trite good will which doesn't honour anyone because it flatters everyone. You get indignant at the phlegmatic lyricism of this grave Philinte who makes a show of being moved by the Duchess of Orléans and whose sycophancy extends even to Blanqui.' One does not have to share Forcade's disdain for Lamartine to appreciate the cogency of his critique of Lamartine's 'phlegmatic lyricism'.<sup>54</sup>

Taken as a whole, the *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848* is not only a defence of Lamartine's actions in 1848; it is also an argument for his importance, his shaping influence on the course of events. He repeatedly argues that his intervention saved France from falling into a state of anarchy and civil war. A case in point is Lamartine's account of the *journée* of 24 February when, after the abdication of Louis-Philippe, the Duchess of Orléans went to the Chamber of Deputies to offer to serve as regent in the name of her eldest son. Lamartine writes that when he arrived at the Chamber, a group of republicans asked him to meet with them secretly. By his account they feared that France was not yet ready for

<sup>52</sup> A-A. Cuvillier-Fleury, 'M. de Lamartine, héros et historien de la révolution de février' (17 August 1849), *Portraits Politiques et Révolutionnaires*, 2 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1852), vol. I, p. 148.

<sup>53</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. I, pp. 15, 23, 25, 85.

<sup>54</sup> J. Gesztesi, 'Préface' to his edition of Lamartine's *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848* (Paris: Vent du Large, 1948), p. 10; E. Forcade, 'L'Historien et le héros de la Révolution de février,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 1849, Nouvelle période, vol. III, p. 309. In Molière's *Misanthrope* Philinte was a conciliatory individual who was adept at bestowing compliments.

the proclamation of a republic and asked Lamartine to serve as minister during a regency. But they also promised their support should he throw his weight behind the republic. 'The people invoke your name. They have confidence in you. You are in our eyes the man of the hour. What you say will be done.'<sup>55</sup> Thus by Lamartine's own account, the republican leaders left the choice up to him. After a few moments of reflection, he replies with a speech, which he paraphrases (in six pages), like a Thucydides writing about the Athenians. The gist of it is that in his judgement the proclamation of a regency would 'throw France, property, and family into an abyss of anarchy and bloodshed'. Only a republic, a moderate republic, could save France from civil war.<sup>56</sup>

Two hours (and thirty pages) later Lamartine is standing before the Chamber of Deputies, aware that a word from him would move the country either towards an unstable republic or towards an anarchic regency. He describes himself as moved to pity by the beauty and the vulnerability of the Duchess of Orléans, and he summarises the speech he might have made in support of the Duchess, assuring the reader that his speech would have been followed by the proclamation of a regency. 'Lamartine had these words on his lips', we are told. But rather than obey the promptings of his heart, he follows the dictates of his reason. To have supported a regency would have been to 'save the day but to lose the future', to substitute a 'politique de sentiment' for the politics of stern responsibility. Thus Lamartine makes the 'harder' choice and gives a speech calling for the appointment of a provisional government and, implicitly, for the proclamation of a republic. He tells us that the effect of this speech on the angry crowd that had invaded the Chamber of Deputies was like that of 'a declaration of peace accepted by the people'. And his sixty-page account of this episode concludes with a (perhaps imaginary) symbolic detail like some of those that embellish the narrative of the *Histoire des Girondins*: He tells us that as he completed his final peroration, a menacing-looking old man standing near the rostrum 'solemnly put his drawn sword back in its scabbard'.<sup>57</sup>

Another instance in which Lamartine credits himself with having saved France from chaos comes on 17 March. The previous day he had been instrumental in persuading the elite National Guard units to give up their

<sup>55</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. I, pp. 161–62. <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167–70.

<sup>57</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. I, pp. 201–9. Marie d'Agoult, ordinarily much more careful than Lamartine about getting things right, concludes her account with the same anecdote: Stern, *Histoire*, vol. I, p. 227. For a fine critical analysis of Lamartine's speech see D. Dupart, 'Un coup d'état oratoire. Discours sur la formation du gouvernement provisoire, 24 février 1848' in E. Castleton and H. Touboul (eds.), *Regards sur 1848* (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2015), 279–90.

distinctive *bonnets à poil*. Then on 17 March a popular counter-demonstration threatened to turn into something much more dangerous. 'While the people turned out *en masse* from their faubourgs and their workshops for a demonstration that they believed to be a gesture of support for the government', writes Lamartine, a minority of radical zealots and conspirators, 'instruments de fanaticism' and 'agents of sedition', were plotting 'to make use of this well-meaning army of the people' to make it 'the unknowing instrument of perverse and ambitious designs'. Lamartine credits himself with standing firm on this occasion when a delegation of club leaders attempted to force on the Provisional Government an indefinite adjournment of the elections, the withdrawal of all government troops from Paris, and the proclamation of what amounted to a revolutionary dictatorship.<sup>58</sup>

After 17 March, Lamartine writes, he was sufficiently worried about the possibility of a radical coup in Paris that he negotiated secretly with General Négrier, the commander of the *Armée du Nord*, concerning the possibility that the Provisional Government might have to quit Paris. At the same time, he attempted to persuade the more tractable radical leaders to join with him in resisting all 'tentatives of communism, terrorism and dictatorship'. He describes himself as having made overtures to Lamennais, Raspail, Barbès, Cabet, Sobrier, even to Auguste Blanqui. For all of this, and especially for his 'secret' 6 am meeting with Blanqui, Lamartine was much criticised. But he believed (or claimed to believe) that his talks with the radicals had spared France 'the convulsions' that would have been sure to follow the overthrow of the Provisional Government.<sup>59</sup>

Lamartine describes the *journée* of 16 April as another occasion on which he put down a challenge to the authority of the Provisional Government. But this case is more complicated, for his actions were by his own account devious and manipulative. In his history of 1848 Lamartine describes himself as having intentionally exaggerated the threat posed to the Provisional Government by the radical demonstration of 16 April. The demonstrators' avowed aim was to postpone the parliamentary elections and to create a 'Ministry of Progress' concerned with workers' issues. But rumours circulated that they were really planning to purge the Provisional Government and to turn power over to a committee of public safety. Lamartine claims to have 'affected more terror and discouragement than he actually felt' in order to convince his colleagues, notably Ledru-Rollin, to call out the National Guard to put down the 'insurrection'.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. II, pp. 204–7, 212, 221–22, 225–28.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231–32, 235. <sup>60</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. II, p. 309.

It can be argued that for his own purposes Lamartine was actually *staging* a threat to the authority of the Provisional Government. Indeed, Henri Guillemin has described 16 April as ‘an enormous mystification, conceived, prepared and carried out [by Lamartine] with astonishing sang-froid’.<sup>61</sup> Be that as it may, and this view is perfectly consistent with Lamartine’s own account of the *journée*, it is clear that here, as elsewhere in his *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, Lamartine was attempting to persuade conservatives that they owed him thanks for having saved them (and France) from civil war and anarchy. Of course, Lamartine did not get the thanks of conservatives. What he did get was sarcastic comments about incendiaries that turn into firemen.

## V

Throughout his *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848* Lamartine systematically plays down his own evolution towards the left prior to the February Revolution and his alliance, once in power, with Ledru-Rollin and other democratic republicans. In his depiction of the National Workshops Lamartine ignores the efforts made by Marie and others to ensure their failure. Instead he writes of the Workshops as a redoubt of radicalism, as an ‘army of 20,000 workers composed in great part of the lazy and of trouble-makers’. And he describes his own activities in May and June as motivated by ‘a single thought: to dissolve if possible or to crush if necessary the insurrection of the National Workshops’.<sup>62</sup> Thus his insistence on including Ledru-Rollin in the Executive Committee is not explained. Indeed, it is hardly mentioned. And the impression that he creates is that after 15 May his sole concern was to arm the republic against an attack from within.

In the end Lamartine’s effort to present himself as a conservative and thus win the support of the Party of Order was far from successful. While his book received positive reviews from allies such as Eugène Pelletan in *La Presse*,<sup>63</sup> the response of conservatives was hostile and in some cases devastatingly so. Writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the Orléanist Eugène Forcade described Lamartine’s book as an ‘incoherent improvisation’ and ‘a perpetual hallucination’ unified only by ‘the constant praise that M. de Lamartine bestows upon himself’.<sup>64</sup> The review by Alfred-Auguste Cuvillier-Fleury was only slightly more nuanced. Lamartine is

<sup>61</sup> Guillemin, *Lamartine en 1848*, p. 45.

<sup>62</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. II, pp. 459, 474.

<sup>63</sup> E. Pelletan, Feuilleton: ‘Histoire de la Révolution de 1848, par M. de Lamartine’, *La Presse*, XIV, p. 4791 (12 August 1849).

<sup>64</sup> E. Forcade, *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1849), vol. III, pp. 324, 309.

not a historian or a statesman, writes Cuvillier-Fleury; he is a poet. As the head of the Provisional Government, 'he didn't govern; he sang'. And his book was not about the revolution; it was about Lamartine. It was a monument to his pride.<sup>65</sup>

The book sold well at first: 5,000 copies were purchased in the first forty days, and the first edition in two volumes was soon followed by a large format illustrated edition and by a German translation.<sup>66</sup> All of this enabled Lamartine to make a lot of money from the book, 200,000 francs according to Sainte-Beuve. But the negative reviews damaged sales in the long term. A few years later Louis Blanc could write drily about what he regarded as Lamartine's prodigious capacity for self-deception. The *Histoire* was, he wrote, 'an inconceivable novel and the more inconceivable in that it was written, I'm sure, in good faith. M. de Lamartine is too decent a man to have the sad power of deceiving others, but he has the power of self-deception . . . to a degree that is close to prodigious'.<sup>67</sup>

## VI

The last two years of the Second Republic were the most difficult period of Lamartine's public life. He continued to sit in the National Assembly until Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's coup d'état of 2 December 1851. During this period he spoke occasionally, often defending unpopular positions on the suffrage and freedom of the press, on the deportation of *proscrits* and the abolition of the death penalty for political crimes. But the age of oratory was over, and the high hopes that he had articulated for a generation of 'forty-eighters' were dead. When he took the podium he was often interrupted with insults, catcalls, and derisive laughter, and any attempt on his part to evoke the February Revolution and the ideals proclaimed at the outset of the revolution was met with a hail of sarcasm. On 23 February 1850, when Thiers described the 'February Days' as 'funestes'; Lamartine protested. But it was Thiers whom the Assembly applauded. Two months later, when Lamartine compared the suffering of political deportees to that of Napoléon at Sainte-Hélène, he was accused of 'shameful' and even 'blasphemous' language.<sup>68</sup>

Although the coup of 2 December was no surprise to Lamartine, it was a bitter blow. Four days later he drew up a declaration to his electors in the Loiret, condemning the coup and urging them to establish 'a *cordon*

<sup>65</sup> A. A. Cuvillier-Fleury, *Portraits Politiques et Révolutionnaires*, vol. I, pp. 133, 147, 159.

<sup>66</sup> Gesztes, 'Préface,' p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> 'Louis Blanc to Marie d'Agoult', 23 January 1862, in J. Vier (ed.), *D. Stern, Lettres Républicaines du Second Empire (Documents Édits)* (Paris: Editions du Cèdre, 1951), p. 91.

<sup>68</sup> D. Dupart, *Lamartine le Lyrique* (Paris: Documentation Française, 2011), pp. 89–95.



*sanitaire* of abstention and passive resistance' around the new government. But the declaration was never published, and his fears of popular violence were renewed by the widespread resistance to the coup in Saône-et-Loire. Thus he quickly distanced himself from the movement of active resistance. Within a year he had reconciled himself to a ruler whom he came to regard as less dangerous than his uncle. 'I look the other way', he wrote, 'and I work to earn my bread and pay my creditors.'<sup>69</sup>

At the time of the coup d'état Lamartine was sixty-one years old, and he still had seventeen years to live. But his political career was over: he would never again hold public office, not even on the *Conseil Général* of Saône-et-Loire. For the rest of his life his great preoccupation was to pay his creditors. By May 1853 his debts still amounted to a million francs. His main source of income was, and always had been, his pen. In an effort to get out of debt he wrote unceasingly during the 1850s, producing a whole series of literary and historical pot-boilers. These included an eight-volume *Histoire des Constituants* (1853–55) which was intended to be a companion work to the *Histoire des Girondins*, with Mirabeau replacing Robespierre in the starring role. There were also eight-volume histories of Turkey and of the Bourbon Restoration as well as hastily written memoirs and several monthlies offering 'instruction for the masses in history and morality'. None of this prodigious output did much to reduce his debts which, by his own estimation, had risen by 1859 to almost 2 million francs.

In 1858 friends had organised a national subscription for Lamartine and secured the support of Napoléon III. This alienated many of his old republican allies and elicited a ferocious reaction from Legitimists, Orléanists, and the Catholic hierarchy. The bishop of Belley wrote to the organisers that if 'our dear and Catholic France' turned atheist, it would be Lamartine's fault. In 1860 Lamartine attempted to raise money by producing a new edition of his collected works. He sent out personal, handwritten letters to potential subscribers only to provoke responses like the following from Ferdinand de Wegmann: 'Monsieur ... You have done incalculable harm to France. Do not hope that she will pardon you! Let the Mountain subscribe to your works. I only give charity to the good poor.'<sup>70</sup>

In 1861 Lamartine produced a lengthy *Critique de l'Histoire des Girondins* which was actually less a critique than a panegyric to its author. In it Lamartine admitted to no more than 'a few errors of judgment'

<sup>69</sup> Fortescue, *Lamartine*, p. 260; Toesca, *Lamartine ou l'Amour de la Vie*, pp. 525–26.

<sup>70</sup> *Souvenirs de Charles de Cussy, 1795–1866*, 2 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1909), vol. II, p. 339, in Guillemin, *Lamartine en 1848*, p. iii.



amounting to 'five or six pages' in a book of 3,000 pages.<sup>71</sup> His main concern in this uncritical *Critique* was to reply to the accusations of conservatives like Wegmann that his book had 'made' the Revolution of 1848. His response was that his book did not make the revolution or the republic, but that it 'made the republic possible in rendering it innocent'. And he went on to assert that 'without the book on the Girondins, the Revolution of 24 February would have led to terror'.<sup>72</sup> His argument convinced no one.

The view that Lamartine had 'taught revolution to France' in publishing the *Histoire des Girondins* remained pervasive among conservatives long after 1848. There were many who never forgave him either for the book or for what they regarded as the ineptness of his efforts to put out the fire of revolution once it had started. Of course, Lamartine was also viewed critically by radicals. Whereas Wegmann and the Orleanist Eugène Forcade regarded Lamartine as responsible for the February Revolution, the socialist Louis Ménard described him as an *endormeur* who sought to deny the rights of the people who had made the revolution.<sup>73</sup>

A more discerning contemporary assessment of Lamartine's role in 1848 is provided in the history of the revolution by Marie d'Agoult, who wrote under the pen name of Daniel Stern. This work is structured around the contrast between Lamartine, who represents the generous and idealistic aspirations of February, and Adolphe Thiers, who was in his person the 'vulgar dénouement' of an abortive revolution. Insofar as d'Agoult's history has a hero, it is Lamartine. But he is a flawed hero, capable of seducing public opinion but not of satisfying it. He is a soaring orator and his powers of intuition are great, but he lacks patience and political skill. D'Agoult writes that Lamartine's 'negligent optimism' his conviction that to achieve his goals, he had merely to proclaim them in lofty language accounts both for his rise to power and for his rapid fall. She illustrates her critique of Lamartine with a brilliant extended metaphor: 'As his star shone in the sky with an incomparable brightness, he seemed to command the winds that filled his sails and the furious waves that died at his feet, while his distracted hand rested on the tiller without guiding it.'<sup>74</sup> Thus while luck and intuition kept Lamartine from running aground, he never reached the shore he sought. He sailed on, his hand

<sup>71</sup> A. de Lamartine, 'Critique de l'Histoire des Girondins', in *Oeuvres Complètes de Lamartine*, 41 vols. (Paris: l'Auteur, 1860–1866), vol. XV, p. 259.

<sup>72</sup> 'Cours familier de littérature', vol. XII, p. 188, in Court, *Les Girondins de Lamartine*, vol. II, p. 196.

<sup>73</sup> L. Ménard, *Prologue d'une Révolution* (Paris: Cahiers de la Quinzaine, 1904), p. 39.

<sup>74</sup> D. Stern, *Révolution de 1848*, vol. III, pp. 102–3.

remaining on the tiller but not steering the ship. Ironically, as d'Agoult herself recognised twenty years later, the politician who finally did bring the moderate republican ship to port was the 'vulgar' Adolphe Thiers.

There are other ironies in Lamartine's career as a *quarante-huitard*. For all his clear-sightedness in imagining the role that he was to play in 1848, Lamartine seems to have been mystified by the collapse of his own influence once (with his help) the radicals had been marginalised. And for all his Dickensian brilliance in bringing the first French Revolution to life in the *Histoire des Girondins*, he was totally unable to provide a plausible account of the revolution in which he was a principal actor. He saw himself as the saviour of society – as someone who had for three months given substance to the dream of a moderate republic and who thereafter stood ready, if called upon, to keep that dream alive. In retrospect we may see him as one of the last of the political romantics who believed in the power of the word, first through poetry, and then oratory, to transform the world.

## 2 The Many Revolutions of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

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*Edward Castleton*

An obvious problem with assessing the impact of the European Revolutions of 1848 on the political thought of their individual participants lies in the often tenuous relationship between abstract theoretical concerns and concrete proposals for regime reform or change. The case of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon is a good example. Due to the wealth of unpublished manuscripts which complement his voluminous published work and correspondence, it is possible to recapture the effect adverse political realities had on Proudhon's successive attempts to formulate a radical reform programme. Close examination of Proudhon's unpublished work sheds new light on how the French Revolution of 1848 affected the overall arc of Proudhon's ideas between 1847 and 1852, the year after the coup d'état. Proudhon's immense textual output during this period is particularly striking in revealing how successive visions of radical state and social reform were pragmatically cast and recast before, during and after the Second Republic.<sup>1</sup>

One of the immediate consequences of the Revolution of 1848 for Proudhon was to sever his pre-February economic platform from a corresponding political vision for a reformed social order within the framework of Orléanist constitutional monarchy. In the ensuing process, political considerations regarding how to eradicate the state took precedence in Proudhon's writings over economic considerations of how best to refashion society. During this period, Proudhon became a resolute anti-statist, whose ideas were peculiarly able to adapt themselves with each successive regime change.

Paradoxically, Proudhon's penchant for favouring the primacy of the economic over the political (and the subservience of principles of governmental form to the radical transformation of society) led him to be

<sup>1</sup> What follows is a condensed summary of two long introductions for forthcoming critical editions of Proudhon's unpublished manuscripts written between 1844 and 1854, held at the municipal library of Besançon, France. The only prior attempt to examine the manuscript material discussed below is A.-S. Chambost, *Proudhon, l'Enfant Terrible du Socialisme* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2009), pp. 68–203.

actively engaged in politics during the Second Republic. An anti-republican critique of expanding suffrage under the monarchy, made in 1847, mutated between 1848 and 1851 into a republican defence of popular sovereignty and democratic advocacy of the multiplication and proliferation of elections on a local and departmental level. Driven by a desire to weaken state powers which had acquired new legitimacy through universal suffrage, Proudhon sought to attenuate the dangers of concentrated governmental authority by imagining the death of the state through a thousand electoral cuts. Deeply sceptical of the attempts of rival socialists and republicans to do the same, however, Proudhon went further, developing an anti-statist position hostile to government itself. After the collapse of the republic, this radicalisation briefly even inspired Proudhon during the year after the coup d'état of 2 December 1851 to justify Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's dictatorship until it became obvious that this latest French regime had no serious intention of taking Proudhon's idea of 'social revolution' seriously.

The gap between sociopolitical realities and a desirable post-political future led Proudhon to superimpose an elastic teleological narrative of 'revolution' bridging present and future between 1847 and 1852. If this narrative bridge eliding description with prescription had to be constantly rebuilt to make Proudhon's vision of 'revolution' seem compelling to his contemporaries, it also led him to revise significantly what exactly constituted 'revolution'. In the resultant revision process, Proudhon shifted from an emphasis on the creation of a mutualist egalitarian society without abolishing monarchical government outright on the eve of February 1848, to an obsession with the need to curb the powers of a republican state. What before 1848 he had considered a distraction from serious economic reform – the democratic transformation of the state through voting – became in the final years of the Second Republic its centrepiece. Yet in this malleable process, democratising the state also became identical with destroying it.

If Proudhon had declared himself an 'anarchist' as early as 1840, defining 'anarchy' as 'the absence of a master, of a sovereign', he did little to indicate what exactly he meant by this endorsement, other than suggesting rather vaguely that the realisation of such an alternative regime would entail imagining a 'third social form' somewhere between 'property' and 'community'.<sup>2</sup> But the events surrounding the revolutionary year of 1848 would change Proudhon profoundly, and compel him to articulate more concretely what that early endorsement might mean in a political context

<sup>2</sup> P.-J. Proudhon, *What Is Property?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 [1840]), pp. 205, 209, 211–17.

radically different from that of 1840. To this extent, the collapse of constitutional monarchy in France forced Proudhon to elaborate a vision of 'anarchy' that focused more explicitly on political representation and went beyond its initial subsumption within a critique of private property rights. Indeed, an increasingly intransigent fixation on the state in place of his prior fixation on economics remained characteristic of Proudhon's later Second Empire writings until his death in 1865. But this constant process of revision raises serious questions about the meaning of Proudhon's 'anarchism'.

## I The Futures Past of 1848

In 1846, Proudhon published his *Système des Contradictions Économiques*, a critique of the key concepts of political economy. Although Proudhon had been tinkering with a concrete programme of overlapping state and economic reform since 1844 in his manuscripts, none of this appeared in the *Système*. Instead, he concluded the two-volume work indicating that his institutional solution to political economy's conceptual antinomies was forthcoming. Subsequent to the *Système*'s publication in October 1846, however, Proudhon was confronted with the practical matter of how to make his programmatic solution gel with the unstable political climate wrought by the rejuvenated movement for electoral reform. In early 1847, one of the parliamentary leaders of the dynastic opposition, Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne, put forth a proposal to halve electoral qualifications from 200 to 100 francs and make the criteria for political 'capacity' be based not just on fiscal qualifications (i.e. the ownership of property) but also on diplomas and other educational certificates attesting to the superior degree of intelligence assumed necessary for voting. Duvergier's measure was supplemented by the opposition's desire to stop functionaries from being able to be simultaneously deputies, a source of political corruption claimed to be worse for France than social inequalities.<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister François Guizot quashed Duvergier's proposal in the Chamber. Guizot argued that property qualifications, which had the advantage of grounding electoral 'capacity' in the existing social order, were sufficient enough proof of political acumen and ability.

As his notebooks attest, Proudhon followed these legislative debates, particularly Guizot's firm rebuttal, with intense interest.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to what the opposition maintained, Proudhon did not find the corruption

<sup>3</sup> On the theme of corruption on the eve of the February Revolution, see W. Fortescue, 'Morality and monarchy: Corruption and the fall of the regime of Louis-Philippe in 1848', *French History*, 16/1 (2002), 83–100.

<sup>4</sup> See Proudhon, *Carnets* (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2005), pp. 473–78.

of the regime's elites overly problematic. Louis-Philippe and the constitutional Charter of 1830 embodied the preoccupations of the bourgeoisie with wealth acquisition, the satisfaction of material interests, and the promotion of greater well-being, comfort, and prosperity. At least Guizot, in Proudhon's eyes, acknowledged the importance of 'capacities' in French society and its economy. When Guizot asserted that wealth and the improved quality of life it brought should be arbiters in the distribution of political power, he effectively argued that matters of economic import should trump politics. Proudhon concurred. But *pace* Guizot, Proudhon thought that society should not be thought of exclusively in terms of its capacity to create a property-holding aristocracy. However, he thought that the claims of those in the liberal opposition that educated bourgeois should also be able to rule by virtue of their superior education were no more compelling than those of Guizot and his allies: 'Why did Monsieur Guizot not dare say that intellectual capacities are the most corruptible, the most corrupt, and generally the most cowardly, the most perfidious of all capacities?', Proudhon exclaimed in his notebooks. In his manuscripts, he angrily condemned those reformers he thought wanted to create a new aristocracy through a less restricted definition of the electoral criteria for 'political capacity', privileging the acquisition of advanced degrees.<sup>5</sup>

It was in this charged political context that Proudhon started writing the promised sequel to his *Système* in which he planned to outline his concrete scheme for restructuring the economy.<sup>6</sup> The sequel to his *Système*, in manuscript form, began with a series of grandiose claims regarding the epistemological superiority of political economy and its relation to humanity's rational perfectibility. In Proudhon's opinion, the intellectual progress of humanity should be understood as the progressive movement of the ideal of justice, unfolding as successive conceptions of equality.<sup>7</sup> This process was presented as a four-stage series of historical revolutions, each 'revolution' reflecting how the idea of justice, formulated in terms of equality, changed so as to make itself compatible with its changing content. The first 'revolution' came about with the development of monotheism, Judaism's evolution into Christianity, and the dissemination of the radical notion of the equality of man before God as promoted in the Gospels. The second 'revolution' came about during the Reformation and the development of Cartesian rationalism with the

<sup>5</sup> *Carnets*, p. 478.

<sup>6</sup> The title of its first draft was *La Propriété Vaincue, Théorie de l'Association Universelle*. It is held at the Besançon municipal library in MS 2848, ff. 1-22r.-v.; MS 2817, ff. 79-97r.-v. and MS 2818, ff. 1-14r.-v.

<sup>7</sup> What follows is sketched out in MS 2848 f. 6v. f.8r.

promotion of an equally radical notion of the freedom of inquiry and of the equality of man as the bearer of the freedom of inquiry. The third 'revolution' occurred over the course of the eighteenth century with the promotion of a new conception of equality: equality before the law, expressing itself not only in terms of the advocacy of juridical and civic equality but also in those of fair taxation and popular sovereignty. This third 'revolution' continued to have resonance in post-Napoleonic Europe as the proliferation of liberal models of constitutional monarchy attested. But Proudhon felt that a fourth revolution was bound to supersede it. This fourth 'revolution' was 'industrial' and brought with it advocacy of the equality of conditions and wealth in relation to labour and human industry. Its language was that of political economy.

Proudhon seized on the present state of the French monarchy to proclaim the imminence of this final 'revolution'. If the inequality of social conditions persisted, this was because electoral reform and greater access to political life could not remove, despite what the electoral reformers of the opposition claimed, distinctions of rich and poor. Increasing the number of elected officials in the legislative branch would not solve social inequalities in wealth; on the contrary, Proudhon thought it might make more sense to limit the number of politicians in office. Nor were property qualifications for participating in the electoral process proof of political inequality since technically the regime still supported equality before the law, which gave everyone potential access to suffrage. Proudhon herein elaborated an ironical defence of the corruption of Louis-Philippe's regime.<sup>8</sup> The king represented the class interests of the victorious bourgeoisie of 1830, whose programme consisted of nothing more than the negation of all existing beliefs and the acceptance of relative political and religious indifference. The bourgeoisie at large was not especially preoccupied with republicanism, absolutism, aristocracy, or Catholicism; the supporters of the regime had no convictions, only an interest in wealth, property, and the well-being they brought. Proudhon argued that this venal Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne regime revealed the fundamentally dysfunctional nature of constitutional monarchy and its impossible reconciliation of royal prerogative with parliamentary initiative. The regime was bound to facilitate its own extinction in a two-part process: first through the progressive extinction of a corrupt legislative branch which did not credibly represent the nation; secondly, through the progressive subordination of the executive branch to the national economy, as society gradually entered the government to

<sup>8</sup> This defence can be found in MS 2848, ff. 17-18r.-v. and ff. 43-47r.-v., as well as in Proudhon's *Carnets*, pp. 403 and 453.

dominate it, reducing and circumscribing state operations to mere policing functions. This withering away of the state would help create the equality of conditions without government and fully realise society as an organic unity different from the aggregation of its constituent citizenry. More than just an agglomeration, French society would reveal itself in this process as an expression of those impersonal productive forces responsible for its economic life with its own 'collective reason', different from the 'reason of the elite of intellectual capacities of the country'.<sup>9</sup> But this revelation was at odds with republican goals of reshaping political representation through suffrage expansion, which would result in a mere agglomeration, but not a fusion, of diverse interests.<sup>10</sup>

Proudhon then discussed organisational details of the associational panacea. He asserted that the real source of inequality in French society was not the lowness of wages (as social reformers often argued), but that the price of products was not in equilibrium with wages. Products were not sold at the genuine cost price for their production; indeed, most producers could not even buy back their products. Here Proudhon outlined a deflationary agenda: to make supply an expression of genuine cost price, and demand an expression of the real utility of goods to be exchanged. Achieving an equitable stabilisation of the prices of exchangeable goods, in Proudhon's mind, would be akin to finding a way to lower prices (and, by extension, wages) without the danger of causing unemployment by opening up local markets to outside competition. This could be achieved by the establishment of producers' associations, organised professionally by major occupational sectors and their constituent trades.<sup>11</sup> These associations could exchange products in kind at current cost prices both within their association and with other associations, such that they could expand in size through the progressive centralisation and interpenetration of different producers' networks and supply chains to capture national and international markets.<sup>12</sup> Proudhon also proposed creating a representational system of graduated electoral promotion based on professional occupation culminating in a unicameral parliament.<sup>13</sup> The government's role would be to co-ordinate the actions of these different professional associations, to whose interests, represented in a corporatist Chamber of Deputies, it would be subservient. Although

<sup>9</sup> MS 2848, f. 12r. <sup>10</sup> MS 2848, f. 11v.-f. 12r.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, there would be one association representing all metalworkers; another for printers and connected trades; a third for fabric trades, etc. MS 2818, ff. 11v.-12v. as well as MS 2821, f. 74.

<sup>12</sup> See my article, 'Association, mutualism and corporate form in the published and unpublished writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon', *History of Economic Ideas*, 25/1, 2017, 143-172.

<sup>13</sup> MS 2818, f. 12v.



there would still be a king, the court, the civil list, and all the costly parasites surrounding the throne would be eradicated. The grossly inflated wages of public functionaries would be reduced to be roughly equivalent with salaries in the private sector, and only the various local communes would be able to create new jobs.<sup>14</sup>

Around the same time Proudhon was completing the first draft of his sequel to *Système*, he was contacted to participate in a projected newspaper, *Le Peuple*. Proudhon appears to have been happy finally to have a public forum for his ideas, although his position was highly idiosyncratic. As someone 'sincerely attached to the industrious and progressive bourgeoisie', Proudhon noted on 23 March 1847 in his notebooks that '[t]he republic and socialism are the two enemies of the nation and of progress, conjointly with the dynastic, legitimist and Catholic party'.<sup>15</sup> In his draft prospectus for *Le Peuple*, Proudhon attributed all contemporary problems facing post-revolutionary French society to the fact that 'the People', who should be made sovereign, only seemed to be able to exercise their sovereignty through alienation.<sup>16</sup> Because of the representative act of delegation, parliamentary government (whether monarchical or republican) was 'a masterpiece of impotence, absurdity, and hypocrisy'.<sup>17</sup> The reworked prospectus was adamant:

We want legislation of the people by the people without representatives; government of the people by the people, without this supernatural person that one calls the prince or the state; the protection of the people by the people, without any other army than civilian militia; justice of the people by the people, without irrevocable magistrates; education of the people by the people without university monopolies or Jesuits; [f]inally, we want the organisation of labour by labourers, without capitalists or masters.<sup>18</sup>

The ensemble of these reforms might succeed in realising the promise of the Constitution of 1793 in which the people, 'sovereign by fact as well as by right', was to act as both the executive and legislative branch of the nation.<sup>19</sup> But it would do so because genuine reformers were aware that popular government had to be based on the principles of political economy and did not consist in replacing one government with another.<sup>20</sup> In other notes, Proudhon additionally argued that post-revolutionary

<sup>14</sup> On all of this, MS 2818, f. 12r. <sup>15</sup> *Carnets*, p. 473.

<sup>16</sup> Few copies of this prospectus exist. One is held with the microfilm collection of Proudhon's newspapers at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Portions of it were published in Alfred Darimon's memoir, *À Travers une Révolution (1847–1855)* (Paris: Dentu, 1884), pp. 8–10. Two original manuscript variations of this prospectus are held at the municipal library in Besançon, MS 2881, ff. 30 r.-v.-31r., ff. 32r.-v. and 33r.

<sup>17</sup> MS 2881, f. 30v. and f. 32v. <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 38r.

institutional developments in France were in keeping with post-Kantian philosophical developments in Germany:

German philosophy is the Revolution, just as Economic Science is the Revolution. The philosophical movement which began in Germany with Kant and which is ongoing, is parallel to the revolutionary movement which began in France in 89, and which is ongoing. The one and the other arrive at the same conclusion: at a positive philosophy which cannot be anything other than Economic Science.<sup>21</sup>

Fortuitously, the institutionalisation of parliamentary corruption within the framework of constitutional monarchy in France spelt the inevitable dissolution and supersession of the existing representative state form and its recasting in terms of the division of labour within society at large.

In his unpublished writings from spring-summer 1847, Proudhon attempted to make a convincing case for shifting the semantic use of the term '*peuple*' from a description of the lower classes to that of the entire nation. In a manuscript outline of the themes to be emphasised in the future newspaper, Proudhon wrote: 'The people is *everyone*, we do not recognise the bourgeoisie, a classification dangerous, undiplomatic, injurious to the people itself, and fit only to defend some paradoxical claim about the people.'<sup>22</sup> The problem of how to emancipate the working classes without frightening the bourgeois class against which they were often set in juxtaposition was complemented by the historical problem of how to overcome the servile desire of the French nation for some form of external personification of authority in a monarch.<sup>23</sup> Proudhon presented himself as both a publicist writing in his name but who was 'the more or less exact interpreter of the ideas of the people',<sup>24</sup> and a mediator who was going to make 'the people' (understood exclusively as the labouring classes) become 'the people' (the agent of national sovereignty, in which the bourgeoisie was an integral part as well).

The banquet campaign for electoral reform spread throughout France from the summer onwards, hastened by a series of elite scandals. Around November 1847, with Guizot under attack from all sides, Proudhon decided to rally to the defence of the beleaguered prime minister. He reworked his earlier manuscript for serial publication in the still forthcoming newspaper, *Le Peuple* making its starting point a full-frontal attack on the extension of electoral suffrage.<sup>25</sup> Proudhon wanted to write an ironical defence of Guizot against the parliamentary opposition, thus

<sup>21</sup> MS 2817, f. 112r. This argument can also be found in MS 2817, f. 111r. and *Carnets*, pp. 547–49.

<sup>22</sup> MS 2881, f. 37v. <sup>23</sup> *Carnets*, p. 545. <sup>24</sup> *Carnets*, p. 547.

<sup>25</sup> This consisted initially of rewriting the beginning of the earlier manuscript, adding three initial chapters. Although missing a few pages, see MS 2866, ff. 264–69r.-v., ff. 244–54r.-v., ff. 220–30r.-v., and ff. 211–19r.-v.

buttressing his earlier defence of the providential blessing in disguise of Orléanist corruption. Judging from his notebooks and manuscripts, it appears that he intended to go one step further than Guizot even. It seems he contemplated arguing in favour of ending legislative debates altogether. He exclaimed in his notebooks that the 1835 press laws 'were not strict enough' and that the 1834 law restricting political assembly was 'one of the best' passed by the regime.<sup>26</sup> Stimulated by the reform movement's advocacy of the interdiction of holding multiple public offices, Proudhon asserted in his revamped manuscript that the salaries of all functionaries and deputies should be lowered across the board and that no one holding both jobs should have more than one salary. But these measures were inscribed within a larger critique of the basic principles of political democracy:

That which one qualifies a democratic regime is only the tyranny of majorities; the most brutal tyranny, the most execrable of all, because it bases itself neither on the authority of revealed dogma, nor on the nobility of origin, nor on the predominance of caste, nor on the prerogatives of wealth or ability, but on number; and it has for its sign the name of the People.

And Proudhon demanded: 'how is [it that] half of all citizens plus one is the people, whereas half minus one is not the people?'<sup>27</sup> Once elected democratically, sanctioned by popular majority, representatives were more powerful than their mandates, neither specific nor imperative in the existing system. This form of democracy favoured the creation of artificial parties, sectarian conflict, and the emergence of a permanent self-interested political class. The constitutional '*juste-milieu*' confusion of the July Monarchy – an eclectic amalgam of the contradictory and competing political principles of monarchy, democracy, and aristocracy 'equally distant from absolutism and the republic' – intimated the inevitably mixed nature of post-revolutionary political regimes in France. Far from being problematic, such hybridity, Proudhon argued, should be accepted:

Destroy the constitutional monarchy, chase away the *juste-milieu*, place yourselves in a republic, or return to despotism, and after the labour of restoration or demolition, you will be very surprised to find yourselves, either in a monarchical republic, or in an aristocratically and despotically constituted democracy . . . Pure democracies or monarchies are things as impossible, as utopian as the philosopher's stone, or the squaring of the circle.<sup>28</sup>

Proudhon also re-crafted earlier arguments in keeping with the anti-representational refashioning of popular sovereignty sketched out in his

<sup>26</sup> *Carnets*, p. 743. <sup>27</sup> MS 2866, f. 266r. and f. 266v. <sup>28</sup> MS 2866, f. 246v.

prospectus for *Le Peuple*. For a genuinely indivisible, unified popular sovereign to have any coherence, Proudhon argued it would have to be thought of as something ontologically distinct from the various individual citizens composing it: namely, a collective entity with its own infallible reason. This rational, collective and sovereign being could only be grasped through the measurement over time of its actions, understood by Proudhon to be analogous to 'teleological judgements'.<sup>29</sup> Having established this ontological dualism and its relation to understanding what genuine popular sovereignty might actually be, Proudhon recycled other arguments from his earlier manuscript.

He went on to superpose an anthropocentric philosophy of history describing a perfectible humanity's coming to consciousness of equality through the progressive perfection and sanctification of the individual on the model of humanity.<sup>30</sup> The ultimate goal of this process, the establishment of a Kantian 'kingdom of ends', necessitated that the four-stage revolutionary cycle Proudhon enumerated in his earlier 1847 manuscript, which began with the revelation of the injunction that all men were equal before God, conclude with the eschatological revelation that man is the equal of God, because, by implication, society was God. Economically this would mean that private interests would be rendered identical with the general interest and vice versa. Politically it would mean that the individual will would finally be understood to be identical with the general will and vice versa. In terms of the larger history of political thought, one could argue that Proudhon sought to replace the sovereignty of the Rousseauist general will with the sovereignty of society by identifying the latter with the telos of a world history of human consciousness. If such futurism represented a characteristic nineteenth-century conceptual innovation upon early modern political thought, the goal remained nevertheless roughly the same as that running from Hobbes to Rousseau: how better to ensure that popular sovereignty was not time-limited but perpetual and separate from the vicissitudes of governmental form.<sup>31</sup>

Surprised by the events leading up to the February Revolution and the increasingly invidious showdown between the government and the parliamentary opposition involved in the banquet campaign in early 1848, Proudhon imagined a change in his hypothetical readership: 'Write more and more for the proletariat, and nothing but for the proletariat',

<sup>29</sup> An argument developed in MS 2866, f. 247v.-248v.

<sup>30</sup> Notably in MS 2866, ff. 247v.-249r., MS 2866, ff. 226r.-229r., confirmed in *Carnets*, pp. 685-88.

<sup>31</sup> For pre-nineteenth-century ways of thinking about this problem, see R. Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

he counselled himself in his notes. 'The bourgeois world is stupid, absurd, perverted.'<sup>32</sup> But reconceptualising this ideal role for himself as a publicist did little to help Proudhon overcome the more practical problem of how he might ever act as a sort of ideological midwife of 'revolution'. This difficulty was exacerbated by the events of February 1848 as Proudhon's claims to have anticipated the telos of social change before the 'collective reason' of the French nation fully revealed itself *a posteriori* were contradicted by political events, at odds with the 'revolution' he claimed to foresee. How to make sense of this disparity and how to make any resultant interpretation of it concur with an interpretation of 'the people' whose 'collective reason' supposedly was both to drive and ratify this 'revolution' would continue to overshadow Proudhon's intellectual output until his death.

## II Universal Manhood Suffrage and the Palimpsest of Radical Reform

As his correspondence and notebooks abundantly attest, Proudhon was initially horrified by the February Revolution, and privately condemned in violent terms the irresponsibility of the lawyers and writers whose class envy, in his eyes, drove them to overthrow the monarchy.<sup>33</sup> The successful outcome of the political revolution only confirmed and reinforced the persistence of what Proudhon found to be one of the worst national characteristics of the French people: a collective penchant for resolving all problems through state intervention (for 'democracy' was but an infinitely expansive understanding of the legitimate purview of government). The Provisional Government's creation of the National Workshops for unemployed labourers and the Luxembourg Commission, charged with labour arbitration and adjudication, was a characteristic example of this disappointing interventionist character trait. Far from being a panacea, universal suffrage would do little to further the economic revolution Proudhon had in mind in 1847, and on 25 February he privately confessed that he almost preferred Guizot to the new Provisional Government:

Surely, the progress of France will happen, no matter what transpires, by the Republic or otherwise; but it could have happened just as well with the fallen government as it was and cost a lot less . . . the revolution which just came to pass could very well be one more hoax.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> MS 2881, f. 33v.

<sup>33</sup> *Carnets*, pp. 782–783, and *Correspondance Inédite de P.-J. Proudhon*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Hon-No-Tomoshia, 1997), vol. III, pp. 162–63.

<sup>34</sup> *Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon*, 14 vols. (Paris: Lacroix, 1875), vol II, p. 280.

There is even evidence that throughout 1848 Proudhon fantasised about a scenario in which the more conservative liberal reformers initially responsible for the banquet campaign wrested control from the radical republican elements within the Provisional Government and turned back the clock to the status quo ante of pre-February 1848 (minus the king), declaring universal suffrage and the democratic law of majorities to be only temporary measures before the advent of a better political system entailing greater participation in government.<sup>35</sup> In this implausible scenario, the newly reconstituted liberal-conservative Provisional Government (having appointed Proudhon Minister of Agriculture and Commerce!),<sup>36</sup> would enact a radical economic programme which was at once deflationary, deregulatory, and ultra-productivist. It would begin by back-tracking on some of the erroneous initial economic measures taken in the immediate wake of February such as repealing recent limitations on the working day (reduced to ten hours), subcontracting labour, and restrictions on hiring, and it would also abolish the recently created National Workshops.

These reflections, made in Proudhon's manuscript notes, were not printed in any public form. When Proudhon first published anything after the February Revolution, it was not until April when he recycled some of his critique of democracy extracted from his 1847–48 manuscript in a work composed of two instalments (Proudhon promised more), *Solution du Problème Social*.<sup>37</sup> In this pamphlet, he argued that it was the excessive personalisation of power wrought by Guizot's ministry which caused the July Monarchy to be overthrown. Proudhon reiterated his prior criticisms of 'democracy' as a 'disguised aristocracy', a 'tyranny of majorities' and a despotism of the multitude in which voting was a form of alienation, unrepresentative of any pertinent feature of existing society because of its highly abstract, atomising nature.<sup>38</sup> Yet if Proudhon still condemned 'democracy', he did so now by juxtaposing it unfavourably with a more genuine understanding of a 'republic' might look like: a 'positive anarchy', one in which suffrage, if popular, would be subjected to more obviously socioeconomic criteria, and 'the People', the rightful sovereign, would be properly understood to exist as a 'collective being' whose functional and organisational needs went well beyond questions of

<sup>35</sup> MS 2844, ff. 76v.–89v.    <sup>36</sup> MS 2844, f. 87r.–v.

<sup>37</sup> These instalments were dated 22 March and 26 March 1848. They were republished in a single volume regrouping several other of Proudhon's writings from 1848–49 entitled *Solution du Problème Social, Banque d'Échange, Banque du Peuple* (Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> In the second instalment of *Solution*, 'La Démocratie', pp. 53–89, many passages were reworked versions of the earlier pre-February manuscript.

delegation, representation, and invidious struggles between minorities and majorities. This republican 'positive anarchy' would be

neither liberty made subservient TO order, like in constitutional monarchy, nor liberty imprisoned IN order, as the Provisional Government understands it. It is liberty freed from all its fetters, superstition, prejudice, sophistry, manipulative speculation, authority; it is reciprocal liberty, and not liberty which limits itself; liberty, not the daughter of order, but the MOTHER of order.<sup>39</sup>

This pamphlet, left unfinished, was followed by a series of articles, entitled *Organisation du Crédit et de la Circulation*, published in the newspaper *Le Représentant du Peuple* (a daily whose founders had fused with some of the members of the never-launched *Peuple* of 1847).<sup>40</sup> The first two parts of this series recapitulated some of the concrete reform programme Proudhon had begun to develop in the wake of the collapse of the monarchy, enumerating different measures for lowering wages and prices in both the private and public sectors. The third part was novel, however. In it, Proudhon argued in favour of the creation of an Exchange Bank, which would replace the existing Banque de France. Proudhon imagined the Exchange Bank putting banknotes in circulation based exclusively on exchangeable products via the generalisation of the use of bills of exchange. Distinct in Proudhon's eyes from mere paper money, which was detached from actual products subject to market transactions, such bills would progressively replace existing currency, each bill representing a specific product while at the same time being a redeemable voucher exchangeable for any available product on the market.

The Exchange Bank idea was indicative of a real evolution in Proudhon's radical reform programme. Although the idea of changing monetary relations was latent in Proudhon's writings prior to 1848, it had become much more central since March, the nature of money itself becoming even its principal object by April. Indeed, the problem of money was not without analogies to the problem of representation at the core of Proudhon's earlier political critique of democracy, since money, commonly mistaken for having value in itself, was in reality no more than a fictive sign indicating the proportion of a given exchangeable product to those other exchangeable products in circulation. Politicising the fiduciary simulacrum of value, Proudhon wrote of the need to overthrow 'the royalty of gold' and 'republicanise specie, by making each product of labour a common currency', such that credit became

<sup>39</sup> *Solution*, p. 88.

<sup>40</sup> The series, *Organisation du Crédit*, was published in *Solution du Problème Social*, pp. 91–120.



something bilateral, synonymous with exchange.<sup>41</sup> He proclaimed that most financial institutions could be made redundant through the abolition of the Exchange Bank and the Ministry of Finances. Most taxes could eventually be eliminated, along with customs barriers and tariffs. Proudhon saw these measures as leading to the unshackling of the French economy through the application of the principles of 'reciprocity' to market exchange, such that Jean-Baptiste Say's law of supply and demand would approximate Kant's categorical imperative.<sup>42</sup> In this manner, Proudhon thought humans could fully assume, in the most egalitarian fashion possible, their double economic nature: at once consumers and producers, debtors and creditors.

Despite his earlier virulent critique of political democracy, Proudhon chose to run as deputy in the 23 April parliamentary elections to the Constituent National Assembly (in Paris, Lyon, Lille, and Besançon), presenting himself as both a genuine conservative and a genuine radical. He claimed that, as the publication of his *Solution* proved, he was hostile to state intervention in the economy, critical of the dictatorial pretensions of the Provisional Government, and hostile to the demagogic rhetoric of class warfare.<sup>43</sup> Unsuccessful, Proudhon ran again in the 4 June by-elections, this time in Paris alone. He enumerated in his electoral programme the radical fiscal and financial measures he would propose if elected.<sup>44</sup> His earlier and largely unpublished reform measures of 1847–48 were now overshadowed by a new financial and fiscal agenda combining public and private debt reduction, low-interest credit, and tax cuts.

Proudhon was elected to the Constituent National Assembly on 4 June, and promptly joined the Finance Committee, where he thought he would have the greatest impact on shaping state economic policy. It is not entirely obvious that Proudhon even considered himself to be a 'socialist' at this point. Certainly, he saw himself in opposition to much of the left-leaning elements in the Provisional Government. But after the June Days, Proudhon's stance changed. Publicly sympathising

<sup>41</sup> *Solution*, p. 107.

<sup>42</sup> Proudhon wrote: 'RECIPROCITY is expressed in the precept: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*; precept that political economy has translated into its famous formula: *Products are exchanged for other products*', *Solution*, p. 94.

<sup>43</sup> See his circular letter, addressed to the electorate of Besançon, in *Correspondance*, vol. II, pp. 299–304.

<sup>44</sup> In his 'Programme révolutionnaire. Aux électeurs de la Seine', published in *Le Représentant du Peuple* (31 May, 1 and 5 June 1848) and republished in *Mélanges: Articles et journaux, 1848–1852*, 3 vols. (Paris: Lacroix, 1868–69), vol. I, pp. 43–74, and in the shorter collection of Proudhon's journalism from 1848, *Idées Révolutionnaires* (in its most recent re-edition, Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 1996), pp. 73–102.



with the material desperation which had motivated the unemployed insurgents, Proudhon advocated the reduction by one-third of all forms of rent, interest, and debt for three years in order to stimulate the economy, thereby incurring the wrath of nervous state censors. When he recycled some of these interest and rent-reduction measures in a 11 July Assembly proposal together with a progressive income tax on a third of all individual revenue, Adolphe Thiers, also a member of the Finance Committee, sought to make him an object of ridicule before the Assembly by refuting, point-by-point, the contents of his proposal.<sup>45</sup> After Thiers's criticisms of him as someone who identified property with theft, Proudhon felt compelled to clarify that what he had meant by the abolition of property back in 1840 – he now called it a 'social liquidation' – was the elimination of surplus revenue from capital within the framework of a competitive market economy.<sup>46</sup> Insisting that he was not a communist, Proudhon claimed to speak on behalf of the 'proletariat' against the 'bourgeoisie' which controlled the legislature. He warned his fellow representatives that their conservatism was paving the way for greater social unrest, unless they recognised that private property had been effectively abolished when the Provisional Government guaranteed by decree on 24 February the 'right to work'.<sup>47</sup> His proposed measure was resoundingly defeated (691 to 2), but this parliamentary defeat transformed Proudhon into a working-class hero overnight, and his Assembly debate with Thiers sold over 100,000 copies as offprints. With many French socialists from the Provisional Government already in exile by this point or on the road to it, Proudhon found himself in the ironical position of being the embodiment of the socialist opposition.

By fall 1848, when it was clear that the bank nationalisation measure was not getting any traction and that the government was unlikely to tamper with the existing Banque de France, Proudhon decided that he ought to promote the creation of an independent 'People's Bank', and, as editor-in-chief of a new, widely read newspaper, *Le Peuple* (not to be confused with the stillborn 1847 paper of the same name), to advertise its untold benefits.<sup>48</sup> Unlike the Exchange Bank, which was to have

<sup>45</sup> For the most reproduction of this debate, see Proudhon, *Deuxième Mémoire sur la Propriété* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1938), pp. 337–406.

<sup>46</sup> Thiers' intervention removed Proudhon's apothegm from the obscurity of its initial reception when *What Is Property?* was originally published in 1840.

<sup>47</sup> *Deuxième Mémoire*, p. 370 and pp. 387–89.

<sup>48</sup> On this subject see O. Chaïbi *Proudhon et la Banque du Peuple (1848–1849)* (Paris: Éditions Connaissances et Savoirs, 2010). *Le Peuple's* distribution rate ranged from 60,000 to 100,000 daily, making it, during its run (September 1848–June 1849) the single most important socialist newspaper in France. On Proudhon's different newspapers during the Second Republic, see my summary, 'Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, seul

functioned without capital at a discount rate of 1 per cent, once divested of the gold and silver reserves formerly held by the Banque de France, the Banque du Peuple would need to have an initial capitalisation rate of 5 million francs, would not divest itself of specie, would issue commercial vouchers to its members, operate at a 2 per cent discount rate, and constantly verify and publicise both the price composition of the goods its vouchers represented and the creditworthiness of its members.<sup>49</sup> If the nature of the bank Proudhon wanted to create changed, the larger deflationary agenda behind his concrete reform programme remained the same. Proudhon was convinced that his bank would help lower the cost and sales price of goods by making access to credit easier and creating peer-to-peer networks of producers in which there was a complete transparency of how goods' costs were calculated. It would also bring down wages, too (since salaries could not be overvalued without having a negative impact on sales), while stimulating increased rates of production and exchange.

Politically, after the June Days, his debate with Thiers, and the acquisition of an immense notoriety, Proudhon distinguished himself as a deputy by voting against the republican constitution, because of the undue authority it gave to the presidency. In his eyes, the republicans of post-February had done little more than to take the previously existing political institutions of constitutional monarchy, scrap the Chamber of Peers, replace the king with a president, and add universal suffrage for both the legislative and executive branches to the package. The dangers of a replay of the French Revolution were obvious, given that, having returned from exile, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte was running for president.<sup>50</sup> Concerned about the risk of political regression from the autumn of 1848 onwards, Proudhon increasingly juxtaposed monarchical and republican principles of government to the detriment of the former. Monarchy now represented hierarchy and personalised power – in its advanced constitutional form, a dysfunctional separation of powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches; the inequality of conditions and functions; and inevitable favouritism and corruption. Republics now represented the egalitarian co-ordination of functions and people; greater levels of economic 'centralisation' and rationalisation; and a better

contre tous. *Le Représentant du Peuple, Le Peuple, La Voix du Peuple, Le Peuple de 1850*, in T. Bouchet, V. Bourdeau, E. Castleton, F. Jarrige, and L. Frobert (eds.), *Quand les Socialistes imaginaient l'avenir* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), pp. 278–92.

<sup>49</sup> For suggestive criticism of the economic viability of Proudhon's bank, see M. Aucuy, *Les Systèmes Socialistes d'Échange* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908), pp. 114–202.

<sup>50</sup> See Proudhon's long article, 'La Présidence' published in November 1848 (no date) in *Le Peuple*, and republished in censored form in *Mélanges*, vol. I, pp. 159–79, and in uncensored form in *Idées Révolutionnaires*, pp. 159–82.

specialisation and decentralisation of state functions.<sup>51</sup> From the summer of 1848 until the summer of 1849, Proudhon stopped attacking the new government, tactically convinced that universal suffrage should be respected, regardless of its outcome, in order better to defend the new republic.

As Proudhon rallied to the new regime, he recycled some more of his pre-February 1847–48 manuscript, this time at a republican-socialist banquet on 17 October aiming to federate different members of the socialist left in the light of the forthcoming presidential elections of 10 December. In his ‘Toast to the Revolution’, Proudhon reiterated his four-stage theory of revolutionary progress through the successive advent of different forms of equality more or less as it was first formulated in 1847.<sup>52</sup> Although this philosophy of history was the same as that expressed prior to the February Revolution, Proudhon now argued that only socialist ‘democrats’ were genuinely on the side of ‘revolutionary practice’ and at the forefront of the final egalitarian phase of human perfectibility. He exclaimed:

To separate the Republic from socialism is to want to make the freedom of thought compatible with the slavery of the senses, the exercise of political rights with the deprivation of civil rights: it is contradictory, it is absurd.<sup>53</sup>

There is a certain *post hoc ergo propter hoc* feel to this commitment to the outcome of the February Revolution and the new republic, particularly given that the same philosophy of history was harnessed to an explicitly anti-democratic end only a year earlier. Because of Proudhon’s elastic understanding of ‘revolutionary practice’ and the way in which it fit into his much larger ontological theory, all ‘revolutions’ could be cast as legitimate once they were proven successful and couched in opportune terms of the *a posteriori* outcome of historical forces.

When political circumstances became more dire subsequent to the presidential election of 10 December 1848, Proudhon continued to adapt his views to the changing circumstances. He argued repeatedly throughout 1849 that socialists should rally to the republic and defended freedom of speech and assembly (a definite volte-face from his pre-revolutionary defence of Guizot). While remaining within the juridical framework of the new republic, socialists should also endorse a strategy of ‘legal resistance’, consisting in the refusal to pay taxes or perform military

<sup>51</sup> For this juxtaposition, see, for example, ‘Manifeste du Peuple’, *Le Peuple*, 2 September 1848, republished in *Mélanges*, vol. I, pp. 135–42, and *Idées Révolutionnaires*, pp. 151–58.

<sup>52</sup> This ‘Toast’ can be found both in *Idées Révolutionnaires*, pp. 222–29, and *Mélanges*, vol. I, pp. 142–51.

<sup>53</sup> *Idées*, p. 226, or *Mélanges*, vol. I, p. 147.

services, rather than seek to overthrow a government seemingly committed both in its executive and legislative branches to the destruction of the republic.<sup>54</sup> Beyond such tactical considerations, in terms of what he actually wanted the 'revolution' to accomplish, Proudhon persisted in promoting his admixture of financial reforms, household debt-reduction measures, and tax simplification.

The vast majority of Proudhon's articles in *Le Peuple* focused either on promoting his People's Bank idea, or polemicising with other left-wing journalists. In January 1849, though, he wrote a series of articles against the imperial pretensions of the executive branch and in defence of the ultra-conservative Assembly. These were promptly condemned in court, overriding Proudhon's parliamentary immunity. Following two more articles directed against the Elysée in March, Proudhon was condemned to three years in prison and slapped with a 3,000-franc fine, a sentence whose extreme severity shocked many of his contemporaries, regardless of political stripe. Fleeing France initially for Belgium, Proudhon decided to return secretly in April to oversee the liquidation of his banking venture. He was not elected to the Legislative National Assembly in May and was finally arrested and incarcerated on 5 June. Although Proudhon would continue writing newspaper articles and books, he would spend the remainder of the Second Republic in prison.

### III The Making of an Anti-Jacobin

After the disastrous demonstration of 13 June 1849, which in Proudhon's eyes had the same demoralising effect for the middle classes that the 1848 June Days had for the working classes, Proudhon was convinced of the tactical necessity of forming a united republican party against the three monarchical ones (Bourbon, Orléanist, and Bonapartist) which controlled both branches of the government.<sup>55</sup> Only the reasons for Proudhon's republicanism were increasingly anti-political. For him, the history of France since 1789 was proof of the anachronism of any attempt to externalise authority in the form of a government placed outside of and above the society it supposedly ought to rule. If all revolutions, Proudhon now thought, were directed by 'the people' against their governments, the political crises of the Second Republic were testimony that the fundamental issue was not how to reform a dysfunctional government: rather it was that government itself was bad and needed to be reduced and

<sup>54</sup> Notably in his articles, 'La République et la coalition (troisième article): Organisation de la Résistance', *Le Peuple*, 23 April 1849, and 'Résistance légale', *Le Peuple*, 27 April 1849, the latter republished in *Mélanges*, vol. II, pp. 143–50.

<sup>55</sup> *Carnets*, p. 966.

decentralised as much as was conceivably possible such that the state's administrative unity could be replaced by French society's economic unity.<sup>56</sup>

Prior to the February Revolution, Proudhon had criticised those reformers who made a distinction between the means and ends of 'social revolution' while arguing that a political revolution (via the expansion of suffrage) was necessary for the latter ever to occur. In his best-selling 1849 work, *Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire*, Proudhon adopted a similar distinction to those he once criticised, arguing now that '*The political revolution, the abolition of authority among men, is the goal; the social revolution is the means.*'<sup>57</sup> Once the *sine qua non* of the historical development of humanity, economic revolution was by implication of this shift made subservient to the destruction of the state. Most of the *Confessions* was devoted exploring how it had come pass that a republican government formed to get rid of a corrupt monarchical one had only succeeded in bringing about the political resurgence of a regressive ultramontane absolutism. The book was structured chronologically in a series of chapters revolving around what Proudhon took to be the major turning points of the Second Republic. Polemical in tone, it was explicitly designed to justify Proudhon's behaviour from February 1848 to the summer of 1849.<sup>58</sup> The constitutional system of Louis-Philippe was again cast as 'the negation of negations', thanks to its extraordinary capacity to corrupt all political institutions. Only now, in Proudhon's post-monarchical reassessment, the regime had failed precisely because it had tried too much to be an impossible '*juste-milieu*' middle term between the separation of powers and a centralised administrative state. Its demise represented the end of political power for the propertied interests. No longer did Proudhon tout either those advantageous features of a mixed constitutional system or the advantages of property restrictions and corruption for inadvertently stimulating the rethinking of political life in terms of economic interest groups.

Although little of this largely self-serving book was programmatic, in the subsection of a chapter devoted to explaining why Proudhon, as a deputy, had voted against the republican constitution in 1848, he returned to his theory of the need for greater institutional 'centralisation' of each specialised function of government, treating the separation

<sup>56</sup> These themes are particularly prominent in Proudhon's notebooks between July and November 1849. See *Carnets*, pp. 971–1027 *passim*.

<sup>57</sup> Proudhon, *Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire pour Servir à l'Histoire de la Révolution de Février* (Paris: La Voix du Peuple, 1849), p. 7. Because of the different modifications made to the text in subsequent editions, I will only refer to the first edition.

<sup>58</sup> In ch. 5 of the *Confessions*, '1830–1848: Corruption gouvernementale', pp. 13–18.

and division of powers as analogous to the division of labour and the specialisation of production in modern economic life.<sup>59</sup> This re-conceptualisation of 'centralisation' was as far removed from despotism as a munificent separation of the different functions of the state would be from the unhealthy separation of executive and legislative branches which characterised political life in the Second Republic. Once the state was reconceived functionally in terms of administration and less in terms of government, Proudhon argued in the *Confessions* that its authority could be depersonalised and its institutional impetuses re-imagined such that their dynamic moved from the bottom up in a system of graduated elections wherein institutional hierarchies were turned upside down, such that the highest echelons of the various specialised public functions of government were rendered virtually superfluous through their democratic reorganisation. Most existing ministries would be reorganised through this graduated electoral system. The ensemble of the different administrative ministries would form a Council of Ministries subservient to a National Assembly. The latter (whose deputies would still be elected by universal suffrage) would crucially not nominate the heads of these ministries, selected by the specific functional groups from which they emanated. The National Assembly would merely fix the budget and regulate administrative relations. The end result of this reorganisation of the state, Proudhon was convinced, would be revolutionary:

There, the government, the state, power, whatever name you give it, brought back to its proper limits . . . Or rather, the government no longer exists: from *anarchy* has come order. There, finally you have the liberty of citizens, the truth of institutions, the sincerity of universal suffrage, the integrity of administration, the impartiality of justice, the patriotism of bayonets, the subservience of parties, the impotence of sects, the convergence of all wills. Your society is organised, living, progressive; it thinks, talks, acts as a man, and this precisely because it is no longer represented by a man, because it no longer recognises personal authority, because in it, like in any organised and living being, like in Pascal's infinity, the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere.<sup>60</sup>

The *Confessions* made the problem facing socialism that of government itself, and the stark juxtaposition Proudhon now favoured was not between monarchies and republics but between government and non-government. This did not signal a radical change in Proudhon's pragmatic editorial tactics, however. With a new paper, *La Voix du Peuple* (*Le Peuple* had been forcibly shut down by the government the evening of 13 June 1849), Proudhon sought to rally those fractions of the

<sup>59</sup> In ch. 14, '4 novembre: La Constitution' of the *Confessions*, pp. 59–69.

<sup>60</sup> *Confessions*, p. 68.

bourgeoisie disenchanted with the existing government to the cause of saving the republic with the hopes of forming a simultaneously anti-communist, anti-statist socialist party.<sup>61</sup> Throughout his private notebook jottings, though, Proudhon's antinomian conception of progress as redefined by the *Confessions* became increasingly pronounced as he envisaged societies evolving through the successive negation of their positive institutional forms. Proudhon continued to fantasise about eliminating various government elites while slashing the state budget. He regularly imagined the arrest of most high-ranking members of the magistracy along with those Assembly members and journalists who had sided with the anti-republican forces of reaction.<sup>62</sup> Provided his debt-reduction and interest-levelling financial programmes were put into effect, there would no longer be any need for a standing army or gendarmes since there would no longer be any rentiers whose interests needed to be protected. Revolted by the recent French intervention in Italy, Proudhon maintained that army conscription and recruitment should be abolished, and military service reduced and turned over to a reorganised mobile national guard. Disgusted with the Catholic Church, which had rallied to the Roman expedition, he privately advocated the expulsion of the Jesuits from France, the confiscation of the church's assets, and the end of any form of state-backed religion. If, internationally, Proudhon hoped for an end to both the spiritual and temporal powers of the Papacy, he also indulged in imagining a world without customs or tariffs, in which France would undermine Britain's commercial influence and reshape the geopolitical order in its newfound anti-statist revolutionary image.<sup>63</sup>

In print, Proudhon kept these destructive fantasies under wraps. Proudhon's contributions to *La Voix du Peuple* remained relatively esoteric, and the political editorial line of the paper was fairly moderate, preaching class conciliation, the unification of the left for electoral purposes, amnesty for all political prisoners, and legal opposition to attempts to subvert the republican constitution. In February 1850, Proudhon had secretly promised the police prefect that he would no longer write any articles on political matters in order to avoid trial and inevitable sentencing for a series of facetious articles sardonically encouraging a Bonapartist coup d'état. But with circulation rates falling, he could not restrain himself. During the April 1850 by-election campaign,

<sup>61</sup> To this end, Proudhon took to the terrain of ideas waging a long series of polemics in *La Voix du Peuple*, one with Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux over the nature of the state, and another with the militant liberal economist Frédéric Bastiat on the question of interest and capital.

<sup>62</sup> For this and what follows, see *Carnets*, pp. 1039–40.

<sup>63</sup> For some examples in Proudhon's notebooks, *Carnets*, pp. 929 and 1040.



Proudhon wrote another article sharply critical of the government. Keen to silence an influential voice capable of facilitating a left-wing electoral victory, the police prefect immediately had Proudhon's secret promise published, and transferred him to the isolation of a political prison in remote Picardy.<sup>64</sup>

Proudhon was brought back to Paris in early June to face trial for this latest offence and acquitted, but served the remainder of his earlier sentence. Between August 1850 and April 1851, deprived of a newspaper, Proudhon returned to his ontological re-conceptualisation of popular sovereignty, now divorcing altogether the latter from any theoretical or practical discussion of the importance of economics.<sup>65</sup> Proudhon took as his starting point the assertion that the ideas and material interests of the different members of society are constantly subject to change and fluctuation. In the ensuing 'movement', progress was identical with the successive negation and affirmation of ideas representing different competing principles of social organisation. 'Revolutions' were the expression of the social interests developing with those evolving ideas. Humans attempt to make sense of the chaos of meaning by initially looking for ideals in absolute forms external or superior to human society. The overarching narrative of the progressive history of human consciousness could be summarised as the story of the recognition that those ideals, instinctively ascribed by primitive societies to transcendent forms, should be associated with the genuine progenitor from which they emanated: 'humanity' itself in its various social forms.

Impeding the secularisation of human consciousness from unfolding was the inability of people to recognise the unusual ontological status of those collective units which were the genuine 'revolutionary subject' of human history. Whether the 'revolutionary subject' be called 'the people', 'the nation', or 'humanity', it always acted as a 'collective being' or 'collective man', at once equal and superior to the individuals who constituted it yet different and distinct from them. For such complex 'groups' characterised by their composite relations, unlike for individuals, instinct and reason, virtue and passion, will and necessity, were identical and synonymous. Although the 'group' was the 'only form by which we can

<sup>64</sup> On the relations between Proudhon and Paris police prefect, Pierre Carlier, see C. Gaillard, *Proudhon, Prisonnier Politique, 1849–1852* (Paris: Archives Proudhoniennes, 2011).

<sup>65</sup> Various drafts of this manuscript project can be found in MS. 2857 and MS. 2866. See also *Carnets*, pp. 1170–1406 *passim*. On these 1850–1851 writings, see my essay, 'Aux origines de l'ontologie sociale proudhonienne: l'apport des manuscrits inédits' in J.-C. Angaut, D. Colson and M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *Philosophie de l'Anarchie: Théories Libertaires, Pratiques Quotidiennes et Ontologie* (Lyon: Atelier de Création Libertaire, 2012), pp. 103–30.



conceive and represent for ourselves Being', there was no point in looking for causes to explain the actions of 'collective man'.<sup>66</sup> The distinct product of 'the synthesis of the multiple and the one' defining 'being', its collective rationality could solely be understood *a posteriori*, in terms of a larger telos measured retrospectively over time.<sup>67</sup>

It was only by taking the long view to understand 'collective being' and its 'collective reason' that one could ever hope to ascribe both meaning and consciousness to French society since 1789. 'Social science', once associated with Fourierist and other socialist sects' attempts to legitimate the reorganisation of the division of labour through reference to the natural and physical sciences, was herein redefined by Proudhon as the historical study of 'revolutionary practice' in relation to 'the psychology of Humanity, the understanding of the faculties, ideas, judgments, passions, and operations of the universal soul'.<sup>68</sup> The French Revolution was exemplary of this process, as it illustrated how 'the people', rendered sovereign in 1789 and confused by the rivalries between competing parties and factions, personified and attributed to certain of its members the responsibility for the execution of its ideas (whether it be the king, the Assembly, various club demagogues, or Napoleon). The consequences of representational delegation were disastrous, culminating in a cannibalistic series of purges for which Robespierre and the Jacobins were responsible. But over the long term, the process of personification through attributive representation rendered necessary its negation and the supersession of the need for government altogether. The French Revolution had additionally revealed how difficult it was to end the endless cycle of purges of rival sectarian factions without a clear and open debate defining what the object of 'revolution' should be, as well as the means to attaining it.<sup>69</sup> Were there to be complete freedom of speech in France, a proper discussion could be had about how government, as an expression of society, should be redefined to fit the needs of French society as its subordinate. Only by granting maximal autonomy to the composite parts of the 'collective being' of society could the latter realise its true ends through the unfettered exercise of its 'collective reason'.

Proudhon would never finish his manuscript on 'revolutionary practice'. Instead he dropped its composition to write in a flurry of two months what was his most explicitly programmatic work, his 1851 *Idée Générale de la Révolution au XIXe siècle*.<sup>70</sup> The most noteworthy feature of this book, dedicated to the French bourgeoisie, was Proudhon's attempt to

<sup>66</sup> MS 2866, f. 210. <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 206. <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 131.

<sup>69</sup> Proudhon hoped to illustrate his ontological theory with a history of the French Revolution which would comprise the second half of his projected work.

<sup>70</sup> I quote from the most recent French re-edition (Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 2000).

enumerate in print his programmatic reform agenda in *Idée*'s last three chapters. If Proudhon's proposed measures were similar to those already put forward in early 1848, they were itemised within the larger project of 'social liquidation', in which all forms of rent were to be gradually eliminated. Proudhon admitted that this programme represented a nuanced change from his early writings on property.<sup>71</sup> Since 1848, he claimed that he sought only to destroy those monopolistic aspects of private property responsible for its perversity. Minus such features, private property could legitimately continue to exist. Abolishing private property was politically unrealistic, moreover, since by Proudhon's estimates two-thirds of the French population was rural, invested in owning property, and susceptible to a paranoid hostility to socialism. Proudhon did not think the fundamental organisation of agricultural labour inputs needed to be restructured for the peasantry, nor, for that matter, did he believe that the small-scale productive output of lower-middle-class skilled artisans needed to be recast through the abolition of individual ownership since those artisans were only in need of being unburdened from the shackles of usurious debt. The same could not be said of unskilled urban labourers found in manufactures, the shipping industry, mining, or railways, however. Taking up an idea in gestation since 1849, Proudhon argued that labourers in these latter sectors should be regrouped in 'workers' companies', governed by profit-sharing and more equitable forms of remuneration in proportion to employees' specific contribution and overall output.<sup>72</sup> Proudhon likewise returned to his prior attempts to set the proper parameters of state intervention in the economy. Accordingly, outside of the purely local municipal or departmental level, the state should only intervene in the economy to verify the 'just price' of products (i.e. cost price plus labour). Once interest rates were sufficiently lowered, there would be no need for tariffs and customs duties, as French products would become competitive because of their low cost.

This measure would force other countries to reduce their interest rates, prompting a virtuous deflationary cycle. But the panacea of a revamped 'centralisation' was distinctly absent, as it was precisely administrative centralisation which Proudhon now took to be at the root of 'corruption'. Excessive administrative centralisation was responsible for the 'castration

<sup>71</sup> For Proudhon's admission on this subject, see *Idée Générale*, pp. 226–28. On Proudhon's shifting positions on property, see the still-useful study by Aimé Berthod, *Proudhon et la Propriété. Un Socialisme pour les Paysans* (Paris: Giard, 1910).

<sup>72</sup> Proudhon herein elaborated upon the notion of 'collective force' he had first discussed in his initial 1840 critique of the surplus value accrued by capitalists through their exploitation of the division of labour. See *What Is Property?*, especially pp. 86–94.

of liberty', much as the state financing of religion was responsible for the 'rape of conscience'.<sup>73</sup> A more robust insistence on local autonomy, less present in his pre-revolutionary manuscripts, was deliberately meant to counter any notions of a republic 'one and indivisible'. Proudhon predicted that the end of government in France would spread throughout the world. It would reshape international relations, further an 'economic revolution', and usher in a 'universal republic' based on trade and the free circulation of products. Nationality and state borders would thereafter be rendered irrelevant.<sup>74</sup> Now it was time to recognise that 'THE REVOLUTION IS ABOVE THE REPUBLIC'.<sup>75</sup> If the affirmation was not incompatible with Proudhon's beliefs on the eve of February 1848, there were no anti-republican monarchical sympathies inspiring to its formulation.

Shortly after completing *Idée Générale*, Proudhon toyed with expanding upon his historical reflections on the French Revolution, which he planned to use as an illustration of his larger ontological theory. He envisaged a chronological history of humanity in which the events of the French Revolution would be inscribed within a world-historical narrative, charting the progressive secularisation of human consciousness from the original cosmogonic moment of creation of life on earth to the Second Republic. This 'revolutionary atlas' would chronicle the spread of freedom from the earliest recorded human societies to the present (and, by teleological extension, to humanity's anarchist future as well).<sup>76</sup> When he contemplated returning to his manuscript on 'revolutionary practice', his ontological reflections were even more radically pluralist, vitalist, and relativistic.<sup>77</sup> Proudhon insisted that 'being' was the product of composite 'groups' of various size and constitution; 'life' was the 'movement' of such 'groups' based on internal oppositions between their constituent parts; and 'death' was synonymous with the breakup of a 'group'. But this meant that everything in the universe was finite; the concepts of eternity, infinity, and the absolute were absurd; and the rational necessity of recognising the forward march of freedom rendered appeals to rights, duties, faith, or laws equally superfluous. Individuals were good or bad depending largely on those circumstances shaping the 'movement' of their 'group' such that it sufficed

<sup>73</sup> *Idée Générale*, p. 282.

<sup>74</sup> These arguments are put forth in the closing pages of ch. 7 of *Idée Générale*, pp. 295–302.

<sup>75</sup> *Idée Générale*, p. 316.

<sup>76</sup> For evidence of the origins and development of this project, see *Carnets*, p. 1293, pp. 1449–97 *passim*, pp. 1503 and 1515.

<sup>77</sup> For examples, see *Carnets*, pp. 1460–62 and pp. 1464–67.

to change such circumstances to refashion the beliefs of group members and their 'collective reason' and 'collective being'.

According to Proudhon, the advent of universal suffrage with the 1848 Revolution had raised awareness of the multiple forms sovereignty could take (themselves expressions – whether on the national, regional, local, or professional level – of the multiple forms of being), allowing cognisance, without recourse to the idiom of rights and duties, of the importance of 'individual sovereignty' (the sovereignty over the exercise of one's faculties and oneself) for popular sovereignty ever to be properly exercised. If individual sovereignty expressed itself through the exertion of the will in the outside world through the act of production, it was developed and strengthened by the various contractual obligations and relations related to the complex division of labour characterising modern social life. The health of the latter was even dependent on the flourishing of the former since the ultimate guarantee of collective sovereignty was individual sovereignty. But Proudhon's conception of sovereignty had likewise become highly fragmented. For example, he now thought France itself should be reconceived of as 37,000 un-federated communes whose only apparent national coherence came from the organisation of those various professions active in its economic life.<sup>78</sup> It was unclear whether Proudhon sought to expand the locus of popular sovereignty to encompass all of humanity or retract it to circumscribed localities. Nor was it obvious anymore in Proudhon's thought where the composite collective being which was French society ended and its component parts began. Certainly, by making popular sovereignty perpetual through its inscription in a post-Hegelian philosophy of history, Proudhon could downplay the specificities of any existing political regime in a time of revolutionary turmoil and constitutional uncertainty. But this argumentative advantage, already present in Proudhon's manuscripts dating back to the 1847–48 period, now seemed in a republican context to cause him to confound the state, understood as an abstract entity superior but related to any really existing government, with government itself. And this amalgam was made in order better to reject both in the name of 'revolutionary practice'.

#### IV Anarchism or Caesarism?

In his notebooks from the second half of 1851, the bulk of Proudhon's criticisms of his contemporaries largely shifted from economic doctrine to the tactical blunders of the left-wing political opposition comprising what

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1495.

remained of the parliamentary force of '*la Montagne*' and its supporting chorus of republican and socialist exiles in London.<sup>79</sup> Confident in forthcoming legislative victories in 1852, the neo-*Montagnards* were mistaken in assuming that the infallibility of universal suffrage was expressed in electoral outcomes, or in imagining that suffrage exists only to legitimate sovereign authority embodied in the state. By refusing to engage actively with its adversaries while grandstanding on constitutional principle to the point of even endorsing abstention until the 1852 elections, the political left had condemned itself to irrelevance. Unwilling to negotiate with Louis-Napoleon, the far left failed to attenuate the dangers of a coup d'état many contemporaries predicted in the closing months of 1851. The result was when the coup occurred, despite some republican resistance, Louis-Napoleon had overwhelming popular support. As Proudhon noted after the plebiscite ratifying the coup d'état:

Louis XIV was constrained to a certain point by the parliaments, the clergy, etc.; – L[ouis]-B[onaparte], with a blank endorsement of 7,000,000 votes, is constrained only by his own whims. This despotism is greater even than that of the Roman emperors and the tsars.<sup>80</sup>

The question of popular legitimacy in the face of political illegality would haunt Proudhon in the months following the coup d'état, forcing him to return to the experience of universal manhood suffrage with a newfound bitterness. The coup had been facilitated by the lower-income majority. 'Giving political rights to the ignorant and stagnant masses', Proudhon observed in his notebooks, 'is like having schoolteachers taught by their pupils, fathers by their underage children, etc.'<sup>81</sup> In Proudhon's opinion, the masses were instinctively inclined to despotism, reverent of the embodiment of authority, resentful and envious of elite class privileges, susceptible to demagogues, and generally hostile to political and economic freedom. As he noted in his notebooks:

Democratic France is also a Caesarist France; a France enemy of liberty. Always in stirring up the dregs of society, in calling on their judgment and influence, one is sure to make them produce tyranny. It is very much the sansculottism of 92 which produced the tyranny of Robespierre and that of the Emperor; just as universal suffrage produced the government of the 2nd of December.<sup>82</sup>

The intellectual chasm separating an enlightened but egotistical and fearful bourgeoisie from the urban working classes and the rural peasantry

<sup>79</sup> This is the dominant theme of Proudhon's notebooks from mid-November 1851 up until the eve of the coup d'état. See *Carnets*, pp. 1536–45.

<sup>80</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF 14273, p. 249. <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

had simply proved to be too great. To this extent, the ultimate source of Bonapartist legitimacy lay in the newly enfranchised masses' deficient 'political capacity', which revealed itself in the end to be both as intractable and fatal as the internal contradictions of the republican constitution. If the vector of class envy for Proudhon was now the lower classes and no longer bourgeois electoral reformers, as it had been in the run-up to the February 1848 Revolution, the problem of expanding suffrage was once again the subject of Proudhon's ire.

Such sociological observations led Proudhon to return to his earlier philosophical attempts to re-conceptualise popular sovereignty. Its very idea, he insisted, should be reconceived of as a goal, part of a teleological state of becoming. Similarly, 'democracy' should indicate not a type of political regime – one based on government by all and whose mode of election was voting – but recast as an existential mode of historical becoming, representing the programmatic enlightenment and progressive intellectual emancipation of 'the people', now no longer the entirety of the nation but demoted to the envious, ignorant lower classes, who, out of a jealous desire to expropriate the bourgeoisie, favoured a demagogic despot. Proudhon repeatedly suggested in his diaries and correspondence that the word '*démocratie*', as it was popularly understood, was itself misleading since it was too contaminated by the envy of demagogues who wanted to take the place of former political elites: it should be replaced by '*démopédie*', a neologism he thought might better express the world-historical pedagogical function of political and social institutions as they developed over time.<sup>83</sup> In keeping with the larger philosophy of history he had tried to rework in his prison writings since August 1850, Proudhon reiterated his belief that humanity and its various constituent groups should be thought to form a perfectible 'collective being', achieving freedom only gradually, after countless reversals and setbacks.

Faithful to this optimistic teleological theory of the progress of human consciousness, Proudhon chose to mask much of his pessimism and anger at the new dictatorial regime when he finally wrote a book attempting to make sense of the coup as the logical outcome of the mismanagement of republican government, *La Révolution Sociale Démontrée par le Coup d'État*, published shortly after he was released from prison in 1852. In this implausible, ironical endorsement (similar in the extent of its wishful thinking to his pre-1848 endorsement of Guizot) of Louis-Napoleon's dictatorship, Proudhon argued that the understanding of '*social*' revolution worth retaining in 'socialism' was

<sup>83</sup> See Proudhon's *Correspondance*, vol. IV, pp. 196 and 217.

identical with the gradual negation of all institutional forms of political and economic hierarchy; the end of politics dangerously personalised and alienated by representation and delegation; and the negation of state authority itself via the substitution of the economic for the political. Louis-Napoleon should stand above the factionalism of the different parties of the Second Republic and seek to fuse the bourgeoisie and the proletariat into the middle class. When faced with the option of choosing between 'Anarchy' or 'Caesarism', Proudhon recommended the former option, identical with the inevitability of 'socialism' itself, whose 'last word' was 'along with *non-interest, non-government*'.<sup>84</sup>

Over the course of the 1850s, Proudhon would drop his original project of writing a grand philosophical treatise on social ontology. His unfinished manuscripts attest to the difficulties he had with inscribing the earlier ontological theory of 'the people' into a convincing narrative of 'revolution' characterised by the subsumption of the state to the economic transformation of society marking the fulfilment of human history. Increasingly the concept of 'the people' became even more underdetermined in his vocabulary by pluralist conceptions of the different 'groups' constituting the 'collective being' of French society, alternatively defined as a nation, a department or municipality, a producers' association, a single workshop, or even a family. After the publication of *La Révolution Sociale*, Proudhon returned to the study of economics, trying to write a treatise on par with his unpublished sequel to the 1846 *Système*. Yet judging from the morass of notes and chapter drafts that he left incomplete, one no longer finds any trace of the complete ontological theory first developed before the February Revolution, then revamped as a theory of popular sovereignty under a republican regime in 1850–51. Proudhon published re-worked portions of his manuscript on 'revolutionary practice' in 1853 as a short book entitled *Philosophie du Progrès*, but the political (or anti-political) inspiration behind Proudhon's theory of 'collective being' and 'collective reason' was largely absent, reflections about 'the people' being replaced by esoteric epistemological considerations about the generation of ideas within a linear rationalist philosophy of history. Subsequently, Proudhon struggled in manuscripts written between 1852 and 1854 to redefine the 'revolution' in intellectual terms as the emergence of the science of economics, which had the epistemological potential to replace religion and finally render human history intelligible. But as the Empire consolidated itself at home and survived the Crimean War abroad, the superior ratiocinating powers of economics lost their allure, for it was unclear how the 'reason' of the 'collective being'

<sup>84</sup> *La Révolution Sociale* (Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 2013 [1852]), pp. 182 and 183.



which was French society would ever improve its self-consciousness given the degraded baseness of its members.<sup>85</sup>

At odds with his earlier tactical criticisms of the French republican and socialist left during the Second Republic, Proudhon's final political writings on parliamentary opposition and working-class candidacies during the legislative elections of 1863–64 rejected all participation in the political process, so long as the Empire existed, apart from positive abstention in the form of blank ballots. His confident political pragmatism of 1847–52 had evaporated with his hope of mastering any compelling narrative of 'revolution'. Just as the alliance between the most earnest productive elements of both the French bourgeoisie and the working-class Proudhon desired during the Second Republic seemed inconceivable by the early 1860s, there was also no longer any plausible grand historical narrative of humanity's perfectibility in which to inscribe this improbable sociological coalition.

Proudhon's crisis of revolutionary faith in history's future was directly provoked by his concrete experience of an ephemeral republican government based on universal manhood suffrage. Without the Revolution of 1848 and the evolving interpretations of the actual practice of political democracy it inspired, Proudhon might have never shifted his radical preoccupations from the terrain of economics to that of anti-statism. 'Anarchism' – to the extent that this inchoate ideological tradition can be thought to exist with any doctrinal coherence – would have lost one of its founding fathers. In terms of his economic thought, Proudhon might otherwise be remembered by posterity to have been a heterodox liberal advocate of a hybrid mix of deflation, austerity, wage caps, low interest rates, limited-to-non-existent taxation, privatisation, maximal market transparency, mutualism and free trade qualified by networks of producers' associations. In terms of his political thought, he might be remembered to have been an advocate of corporatist representation and the reduction of government to a monarchist night-watchman state who happened along the way to develop a curious ontological theory about the teleological nature of societies with the hopes of saving the French monarchy from the dangers of democracy. If the Revolution of 1848 prevented this alternative posterity from bequeathing itself to us, it also provided its own lost legacy with regard to how Proudhon could have been remembered. Had the Revolution of 1848 gone differently in France,

<sup>85</sup> See my article, 'L'impossible comptabilité divine, ou l'inachèvement de l'œuvre économique de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon', *Économies et Sociétés*, 52, 4/5 (2014): 523–59.



being an ‘anarchist’ like Proudhon, far from being synonymous with a principled hostility to the state and the electoral politics surrounding it, might instead mean voting locally and frequently on those legislative matters most specific to one’s place of residence and profession while nominally taking pains to safeguard the interests of the bourgeoisie. Political events did not unfold as Proudhon and many other contemporary radicals desired, and from the deceptions of the Revolution of 1848 in France grew the seeds of an intransigent anti-statism known today as ‘anarchism’.

### 3 French Republicanism after 1848

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*Thomas C. Jones*

On 24 February 1848, after three days of revolution in Paris, France became a republic for the first time in half a century. Although announced amid scenes of public enthusiasm, the Second Republic quickly faltered. Republicanism's sudden elevation from semi-clandestine opposition into government revealed its contentious internal ideological divisions. Rising anti-revolutionary sentiment caused the conservative Party of Order to win control of the republic's legislature in 1849 and initiate a system of anti-republican repression. On 2 December 1851, President Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte launched a coup d'état, destroying the republic and paving the way for his eighteen-year reign as Emperor Napoleon III.

This series of disasters attracted derision. Karl Marx famously dismissed the Second Republic's 'low farce' while other critics considered the February Revolution an accident, even a 'sudden catastrophe'.<sup>1</sup> An image emerged of the republicans of 1848 as naïve utopians whose failures were only reversed by a younger and more pragmatic generation during the Third Republic.<sup>2</sup> Historians searching for the roots of France's 'republicanisation' have therefore traditionally overlooked 1848, focusing instead on the 1870s, when the Third Republic won mass support and thwarted hopes for monarchical and Bonapartist restorations.<sup>3</sup>

Yet some, notably Maurice Agulhon, have seen 1848–51 as an 'apprenticeship' which shaped several aspects of republican ideology, notably its emphasis on legality, its anti-clerical secularism, and its commitment to

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx, *Later Political Writings*, T. Carver (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 31; C. Phipps, First Marquis of Normanby, *A Year of Revolution: From a Journal Kept in Paris in 1848*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1857), p. xi.

<sup>2</sup> A. Vermorel, *Les Hommes de 1848*, 2d edn. (Paris: Décembre-Alonnier, 1869); J. Ferry cited in J. Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Classic accounts include D. Halévy, A. Silvera (ed. and trans.), J. Guicharnaud (trans.), *The End of the Notables* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, [1930] 1976); C. Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicain en France (1789–1924): Essai d'Histoire Critique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982); E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernisation of Rural France, 1870–1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977).

the social well-being of its citizens.<sup>4</sup> More recent scholarship has highlighted a culture of 'democratic modernity', forged during the Second Empire by participation in imperial elections and an open-ended and discursive approach to ideology, which supplanted romantic and dogmatic revolutionism just before the dawn of the Third Republic.<sup>5</sup>

These welcome perspectives should be built upon and connected, because the ideological impact of 1848 on republicanism was both extensive and durable. Republicans long revered the early accomplishments of 1848, which they argued had legitimated the republican form of government itself. In the divisive political struggles of the Second Republic, they forged a new ideological synthesis that began to win mass support in parts of France. After the disaster of 1851, republicans immediately began to propose improved constitutional arrangements, philosophies of popular republican morality, and systems of international republican collaboration designed to guarantee the success of the next republic. These creative changes, though complex and often contested, permanently transformed republicanism and their legacies were plainly visible throughout the Second Empire and well into the Third Republic.

## I 1848 as Republican Vindication

1848's most immediate impact on republican political thought was not one of divisiveness or disappointment, but of affirmation. The February Revolution, emanating from a popular revolt, proved the French nation's antipathy to monarchy and approbation of republicanism, while the Second Republic's Provisional Government vindicated a keystone principle of republican governance through its implementation of universal suffrage.<sup>6</sup> In disavowing the reign of terror, it also escaped the problematic historical shadow of the First Republic and proved republicanism's credentials as a legalistic and humanitarian political system. These accomplishments led republicans to venerate 1848 and hold it up as an example for later generations to emulate.

For republicans, the February Revolution was not the 'accident' or 'surprise' that its critics denounced, but an expression of deep-seated

<sup>4</sup> M. Agulhon, J. Lloyd (trans.), *The Republican Experiment, 1848–1852* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and *Les Quarante-huitards*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Gallimard/Julliard, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> S. Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998) and *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Republican Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jennings, *Revolution*, pp. 60, 98.

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise stated, 'universal suffrage' here refers to the enfranchisement of all adult male French citizens.

desires for change. Marie d'Agoult called it the 'natural consequence' of long-germinating Enlightenment ideas and commercial and industrial change, while Alphonse de Lamartine located its origins in popular aspirations for a 'better order of government and of society'.<sup>7</sup> The shape of that order was revealed as Parisian crowds demanded Louis-Philippe's abdication and rejected a regency for his grandson, effectively making the republic's proclamation the only legitimate outcome of the revolution.<sup>8</sup> This popular mandate was further demonstrated by widespread and prompt declarations of support from bureaucratic, military, and church officials. Despite the nascent republic's relative lack of coercive power, no significant resistance formed against it and self-proclaimed republicanism became so ubiquitous that the term *républicains du lendemain* (roughly, 'latter-day republicans') was coined to differentiate post-revolutionary converts from pre-1848 *républicains de la veille* ('long-standing republicans'). For Louis Blanc, the 'best proof' of the republic's validity was that it 'had no sooner been proclaimed than it was universally and spontaneously acknowledged'.<sup>9</sup>

This interpretation of legitimacy assumed that sovereignty emanated from the entire French people, and was not the prerogative of any individual or sect. Notions of national sovereignty had been integral to the revolution of 1789 and constituted one of its most important legacies for liberal monarchists, Bonapartists, and republicans. But the precise means of discerning and implementing the nation's will were debatable. The First Republic's National Convention was elected by universal suffrage and this practice was enshrined in the suspended constitution of 1793, but the terror had subsequently led to fears of democratic chaos and the restriction of the vote to propertied men in the 1795 constitution. Yet national sovereignty and universal suffrage eventually became inseparable in republican thought. Republicans criticised Louis-Philippe's regime, theoretically based on national sovereignty, for corruption and callousness in the face of entrenched poverty and linked these problems to the regime's restricted franchise. Without universal suffrage, a small elite monopolised power for its own ends, at the expense of the wider disenfranchised nation. Universal suffrage would dissolve these political and social divisions into a sovereign national whole.<sup>10</sup> The Provisional

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Stern, pseudo. (i.e. Marie d'Agoult), *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, [1851] 1862), vol. 1, pp. 5–6; A. de Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, 3rd edn., 2 vols. (Paris: Perrotin, [1849] 1852), vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Stern, *Histoire*, vol. I, p. 347.

<sup>9</sup> L. Blanc, *1848: Historical Revelations: Inscribed to Lord Normanby* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> P. Rosanvallon, 'The republic of universal suffrage' in B. Fontana (ed.), *The Invention of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 192–205.

Government therefore quickly declared the enfranchisement of all men aged twenty-one and over and scheduled elections for a new Constituent Assembly. France's electorate instantly increased from 200,000 voters to 9,500,000, and Alexandre Ledru-Rollin, as minister of the interior, organised nationwide elections held on 23 April. These passed without violence, excepting later clashes over the results at Rouen, and the elected Constituent Assembly, overwhelmingly made up of at least nominal republicans, peacefully took power on 4 May. Universal suffrage was again used in municipal elections in August and uncontroversially mandated in the Second Republic's constitution in November 1848. The basis for sovereignty in a republican state stood vindicated; universal suffrage was not only practical, 'It ha[d] been practised.'<sup>11</sup>

To overcome objections that the terror had proved that democratic government led to disorder and dictatorship, the Provisional Government struck a libertarian and clement tone. One of its first acts was to abolish capital punishment for political offences, achieving a long-standing goal of humanitarian campaigners.<sup>12</sup> The pragmatic imperative to detoxify republicanism and 'fling down the guillotine' here dovetailed with the growing conviction that it was immoral for fallible courts to 'inflict an *irrevocable* punishment'.<sup>13</sup> Some of the First Republic's legacies were more venerable, such as its 1794 abolition of slavery in the French colonial empire. Slavery's reintroduction by Napoleon in 1802 and its maintenance by the restored monarchy caused some to intrinsically identify abolition with republicanism.<sup>14</sup> The Provisional Government therefore appointed Victor Schœlcher, a leading abolitionist, its colonial under-secretary and enacted his plan for abolition 'with an emotion like that which had affected us when we abolished capital punishment'.<sup>15</sup> More generally, the government refrained from arresting or transporting Louis-Philippe's supporters, and it released the July Monarchy's political prisoners. Onerous punishments, like the pillory, debtors' prison, and naval flogging, were abolished. Declaring that the 'Republic lives by liberty and discussion', the Provisional Government ended press censorship, established freedom of association, and presided over an explosion of new newspapers and political clubs.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> L. Blanc, 'Du suffrage universelle' (1850) in *Questions d'Aujourd'hui et de Demain*, 5 vols. (Paris: Dentu, 1873–84), vol. I (1873), p. 202.

<sup>12</sup> Stern, *Histoire*, vol. I, pp. 372–75. <sup>13</sup> Blanc, 1848, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> A. Ledru-Rollin, 'Discours à propos d'une pétition demandant l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies (24 avril 1847)', in H. Ledru-Rollin (ed.), *Ledru-Rollin: Discours Politiques et Écrits Divers*, 2 vols. (Paris: Ballière, 1879), vol. I, pp. 279–96.

<sup>15</sup> Blanc, 1848, p. 268.

<sup>16</sup> *Le Moniteur Universel: Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 20 April 1848, p. 865.

In this atmosphere, the accomplishment of republican ends through coercive means seemed anathema. In his provisional report on the draft constitution of 1848, Armand Marrast, president of the Constituent Assembly, called political violence in a state legitimately governed by universal suffrage where disputes could be deliberated through free discussion 'the greatest of crimes'.<sup>17</sup> Most republicans agreed and the strain of thought which advocated conspiratorial insurrection and transitional dictatorship to enforce social equality, traceable to François-Noël Babeuf's 1796 'conspiracy of the equals' and represented in 1848 by Auguste Blanqui, was consequently marginalised.<sup>18</sup> Although this pacific consensus was sorely tested in June 1848, so long as the Second Republic's institutions remained intact, mainstream republicanism was marked by an ethic of 'legalism'.<sup>19</sup>

These accomplishments confirmed 1848's status as an object of admiration and emulation in republican memory. Lamartine characterised 1848 as an 'extension' of the revolution of 1789 'with fewer elements of disorder and more elements of progress'.<sup>20</sup> Victor Hugo observed that '1792 created the reign of the people, that is to say the Republic; 1848 created the instrument of that reign, that is to say universal suffrage'.<sup>21</sup> As the 'father of universal suffrage', Ledru-Rollin was long remembered for effecting the 'definitive triumph of the Republic'.<sup>22</sup> Repudiation of terror allowed France to move beyond 'dread of the Republic', and later republicans remembered the 'political scaffold' as something 'the revolution of 1848 had broken'.<sup>23</sup> The abolition of slavery was similarly celebrated as an epoch-making accomplishment.<sup>24</sup> The climate of free discussion created in 1848 was contrasted with the intense censorship and repression of subsequent years, with republicans demanding the restoration of liberty during the Second Empire, not just on its own terms, but as a call 'to reconquer

<sup>17</sup> A. Marrast, 'Rapport fait au nom de la commission de Constitution, après avoir entendu les représentants délégués des bureaux . . . Séance du 30 août 1848', cited in F. Luchaire, *Naissance d'une Constitution: 1848* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), appendix 2, p. 195.

<sup>18</sup> P. Rosanvallon, *La Démocratie Inachevée: Histoire de la Souveraineté du Peuple en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), ch. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Agulhon, *Experiment*, pp. 188–91; Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicaine*, p. 138; F. Mélonio, '1848: la république intempestive' in F. Furet and M. Ozouf (eds.), *Le Siècle de l'Avènement Républicain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), pp. 391–413.

<sup>20</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire*, vol. I, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> V. Hugo, 'Discours du citoyen Victor Hugo' in Ledru-Rollin, *Discours*, vol. II, p. 585.

<sup>22</sup> A. Crémieux, 'Discours du citoyen Crémieux', in Ledru-Rollin, *Discours*, vol. II, p. 582.

<sup>23</sup> V. Hugo, *Napoleon the Little* (Vizetelly, 1852), p. 207; L. Gambetta, *Discours et Plaidoyers Politiques*, J. Reinach (ed.), 11 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1880–5), vol. I (1880), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> L. Blanc, 'L'abolition d'esclavage' (1875), in *Questions*, vol. III (1880), p. 442; A. Saint-Ferréol, *Réponse d'un Vieux Démocrate Républicain à un Jeune Démocrate Napoléonien* (London, 1865), p. 36.

the lost liberties' of 1848.<sup>25</sup> Many republicans therefore considered 24 February 1848 'the great date of our time', commemorating it with as much vigour as 14 July 1789.<sup>26</sup>

## II The Second Republic, Conflict, and Realignment

Although the February Revolution had vindicated the republican form of government, the polarising events of the Second Republic revealed serious ideological divisions among republicans, particularly over the nature and extent of republican citizenship. Were the political rights proclaimed in 1848 sufficient, or did the creation of an engaged republican citizenry require the elimination of poverty and ignorance through ambitious social reform? Was suffrage truly 'universal' if it excluded women? Did republican citizenship extend beyond metropolitan France into the colonial empire? Bitter divisions over these questions, especially the first, broke apart the republican coalition of early 1848, causing some to abandon republicanism altogether. Yet France's remaining republicans rallied around a programme of pragmatic social reform, increased civil but not political equality for women, and the uneven extension of citizenship rights in France's overseas empire. This synthesis, first expressed in *démocrate-socialiste* ideology, largely survived into the Second Empire and, though it never commanded universal consensus, provided an influential blueprint for a republican future.

Disagreements over the republic's social responsibilities famously shattered republican unity in June 1848, when the Constituent Assembly announced the closure of the Provisional Government's National Workshops. These 'make-work' projects for the unemployed were widely criticised as drains on public finances, but were by mid-1848 supporting 100,000 workers. Their closure prompted an armed insurrection in Paris by Workshop members and their sympathisers which was crushed in several days of bitter fighting. These 'June Days' seemed to augur a return to political violence, and republicans who feared social disorder and socialistic threats to property more than political threats to the republic's existence joined with monarchists to form the Party of Order. This group backed Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's successful presidential candidacy in December 1848 and swept to victory in the legislative elections of May 1849. In power, it quickly attacked key republican principles of 1848, shuttering the press and disenfranchising nearly 3,000,000 voters through tax and residency requirements.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> C. Ribeyrolles, 'Le 24 février 1848', *L'Homme: Journal de la Démocratie Universelle*, 28 February 1855, p.1.

Yet for many, social solidarity was an essential part of republican politics. The indigent, as members of the sovereign nation, had a moral claim to assistance, without which they could not be the independent, responsible wielders of political power that universal suffrage required. The events of 1848 also convinced many formerly apolitical social revolutionaries to defend the republic as the only regime not overtly hostile to workers' interests. A broad realignment therefore occurred on the French left. Led by Ledru-Rollin, those committed to both republican institutions and social reform formed an alliance of 'republican solidarity', took the hybrid name *démocrates-socialistes*, or *démoc-socs*, and sought 'to assure, by all legal means, the maintenance of republican government and the peaceful and regular development of the social reforms which should be the goal and the consequence of democratic institutions'.<sup>27</sup> Reaching out to neglected rural voters as well as urban republican stalwarts, they hoped to build a national party in defence of the 'true Republic, the *democratic and social* Republic'.<sup>28</sup> The polarising effects of the social question had ironically led to the further identification of republicanism with support for social reform.

The *démoc-socs* sought to build a sturdy republican citizenry by alleviating immediate poverty and creating long-term conditions for workers' and peasants' independent prosperity.<sup>29</sup> Regressive indirect taxes would be replaced by progressive income and land taxes, and the hated 'forty-five centimes' property tax, introduced by the Provisional Government to close an inherited budget deficit but disproportionately burdensome for peasant-proprietors, would be reimbursed.<sup>30</sup> Labour would be created through public works, particularly on France's railways, canals, and mines, all of which would be nationalised, and forests and common lands would be opened for grazing, fishing, and the collection of firewood. Long-term economic independence would be fostered by workers' co-operatives, state-provided cheap credit, and gratuitous primary education. State-run agricultural 'bazaars' would guarantee equitable prices for farmers and a rational distribution of France's food supply. *Démoc-socs* in the Constituent Assembly lobbied for a constitutional 'right to work', an idea popular in leftist republican circles before 1848. They claimed that

<sup>27</sup> *La Solidarité Républicaine, Association pour le Développement des Droits et des Intérêts de la Démocratie* (Paris: Typographie Maltete, 1848), pp. 3–4.

<sup>28</sup> F. Pyat, *Aux Paysans de la France. Toast Porté par le Citoyen Félix Pyat, Représentant du Peuple, au Banquet de l'Anniversaire du 24 février* (Paris: Propagande Démocratique, 1849).

<sup>29</sup> E. Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France, 1830–1852* (Princeton University Press, 1984), ch. 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Aux Habitants des Campagnes. Discours des Citoyens Ledru-Rollin, Félix Pyat et P. Joigneaux, Représentants* (Paris: H. Robert, 1849).



the guarantee of honest labour would provide compensation for society's unequal distribution of wealth, pointed to the First Republic's promises to assist the infirm and unemployed, and linked the right to work to the right to life, which could only be maintained through the subsistence obtained through work.<sup>31</sup> Although these efforts failed to secure an explicit 'droit au travail' in the constitution, much of that right's most frequently cited content did appear. The constitution promised labour to the unemployed 'within the limits of resources' and 'support to those unable to work', as well as free primary education, labour-creating public works, and assistance to orphans, the elderly, and the infirm.<sup>32</sup> This platform won the *démoc-socs* considerable electoral support in 1849 and 1850 in urban centres and in dozens of rural departments across eastern, central, and south-eastern France. But *démoc-soc* confidence regarding the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 1852 was scuppered by the coup. The final moments of the Second Republic proved the degree to which republicanism and social reform were now linked as over 100,000 insurgents rose up in regions of *démoc-soc* strength, announcing their intention to defend the republic against Bonaparte and the enactment of *démoc-soc* policies like debt moratoriums, tax reform, and the redistribution of communal lands.<sup>33</sup>

This resistance was crushed but much *démoc-soc* thinking persisted during the Second Empire. *L'Homme*, the main newspaper of the republican exile diaspora, blamed the Second Republic's destruction on its failure to 'practice the Solidarity which was its duty' but warned that social reform without republican government was 'an unrealisable utopia'.<sup>34</sup> Republicans averse to state socialism still maintained that 'well-being is a condition of political liberty' and argued that solving the social question without destroying economic freedom was 'the great problem for democratic society'.<sup>35</sup> Organisations like the *Commune Révolutionnaire* promised that a restored republic would replace indirect taxes with a 'single tax on capital', found labour exchanges, and publicly issue free credit.<sup>36</sup> Eugène

<sup>31</sup> J. Garnier (ed.), *Le Droit au travail à l'Assemblée Nationale, Recueil Complet de tous les Discours Prononcés dans cette Mémorable Discussion* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1848).

<sup>32</sup> 'Constitution du 4 novembre 1848 (texte définitif)' in Luchaire, *Naissance*, appendix 3, pp. 220, 222–23. Marrast's report argued that this substantively fulfilled the right to work, pp. 199–201.

<sup>33</sup> P. McPhee, *The Politics of Rural Life: Political Mobilisation in the French Countryside, 1846–1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 240–41.

<sup>34</sup> Ribeyrolles, '24 février 1848' and P. Bonnet-Duverdier, 'La Politique de l'exil', *L'Homme*, 28 February and 19 September 1855, pp. 1 and 2, respectively.

<sup>35</sup> É. Vacherot, *Démocratie* (Paris: Chamerot, 1859), p. 157; J. Barni, *La Morale dans la Démocratie* (Paris: Baillière, 1868), p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> A. Müller Lehning, 'The International Association (1855–1859)' *International Review for Social History*, 3 (1938), 210.

Ténot reminded urban republicans frustrated with Bonaparte's provincial popularity of the rural insurgents of 1851 and pressed for continued engagement with peasantry, advice that was heeded by Pierre Joigneaux and others who called for rural tax relief.<sup>37</sup> Most strikingly, co-operatives commanded almost uniform republican support. Ideologically, co-operatives fulfilled socialist aspirations to replace competition and class antagonism with egalitarian and collaborative organisation. The highly different forms of pre-1848 socialism advanced by figures like Blanc, Étienne Cabet, and Charles Fourier had all advocated co-operative labour, and Blanc successfully encouraged the foundation of both state-sponsored and independent co-operatives as chair of the Provisional Government's labour commission in 1848.<sup>38</sup> Yet co-operation did not necessarily entail property redistribution, and for many non-socialists it represented an organic way of reducing misery and social antagonism compatible with the existing economic order. Martin Nadaud could therefore directly link co-operatives with the 'socialist ideas' of 1848 while Jules Barni hailed them as a form of 'conciliation between that which has been called *individualism* and *socialism*'.<sup>39</sup> This consensus on the need and means of social reform led Blanc in 1876 to claim that the positions of his 1848 labour commission were now 'generally adopted' by all republicans.<sup>40</sup>

Masculine conceptions of republican citizenship came under challenge during the Second Republic. Hoping that a new regime would reconsider the status of women, feminists fought in the February Revolution and participated in the political ferment that followed. Feminist clubs and newspapers in 1848 demanded access to education, work, property, and divorce, often exploiting prevailing notions of gender difference by emphasising that emancipated women would be superior mothers and moral educators.<sup>41</sup> They also demanded the ungendered application of

<sup>37</sup> E. Ténot, *La Province en Décembre 1851: Étude Historique* (Paris: Chez tous les Libraires, 1865) and *Le Suffrage Universel et les Paysans* (Paris: Chez tous les Libraires, 1865); H. Merlin, *Lettre à un Électeur Rural: Huit Années de Politique Impériale (1860–1868)* (Paris: Armand le Chevalier, 1868); R. Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 360–61.

<sup>38</sup> Blanc, 1848, chs. 7–8 and *L'Organisation du Travail*, 5th edn. (Paris: Bureau de la Société de l'Industrie Fraternelle, [1839] 1847); É. Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Mallet et Cie, 1842); C. Fourier, G. Stedman Jones and I. Patterson (eds.), *Theory of the Four Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>39</sup> Barni, *Morale*, p. 104; M. Nadaud, *Les Sociétés Ouvrières* (Paris: Librairie de la Bibliothèque Démocratique, 1873), p. 36.

<sup>40</sup> L. Blanc, 'À mes électeurs' (1876), in *Questions*, vol. III, p. 505.

<sup>41</sup> L. Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799–1914* (Penguin, 2008), p. 163; P. Pilbeam, 'Jeanne Deroin: French feminist and socialist in exile' in S. Freitag (ed.), *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in mid-Victorian England* (New York: Berghahn, 2003), pp. 280–81.

republican rights, including the vote.<sup>42</sup> Jeanne Deroin campaigned for election to the Legislative Assembly in 1849, urging *démoc-socs* who ‘ha[d] accepted all the consequences of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity’ to embrace women’s political rights as the logical endpoint of republican principles.<sup>43</sup> However, neither the Provisional Government nor the Constituent Assembly seriously contemplated female suffrage. Several prominent women, including George Sand, who refused Eugénie Niboyet’s entreaties to run for office, argued that society was unprepared for women in public life and that women required social emancipation before political equality in order to acquire the practical independence and education necessary for responsible citizenship.<sup>44</sup> After the June Days, women were banned from political clubs, and Deroin’s 1849 candidacy was ruled unconstitutional. Most republicans continued to see gender difference not as a justification for female political participation, but as evidence of women’s better suitedness to ‘private, interior life’.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, feminist activism continued after the coup, winning some republican support. Deroin issued numerous publications from exile, and Juliette Adam famously denounced the misogyny that prevailed across the political spectrum, proposing women’s emancipation alongside a gendered division of public affairs.<sup>46</sup> Inspired by this, Joseph Déjacque wrote that women had proved the case for equality ‘by their liberty and their blood’.<sup>47</sup> Hugo looked forward to the next republic ‘admitting half the human race into universal suffrage’.<sup>48</sup> Many others conceded the need for multiple reforms advocated by the feminists of 1848, if not equal suffrage. Étienne Vacherot argued that educated women would more reliably instil republican values in their children, while Jules Simon simply observed: ‘Men have no more right to education than women.’<sup>49</sup> Republicans increasingly endorsed divorce, denouncing husbands’ tyrannical legal powers over their wives, women’s lack of property and parental rights within marriage, and the inhumanity of forcing women to remain bound to abusive husbands.<sup>50</sup> By the dawn of

<sup>42</sup> *La Politique des femmes*, 18 June 1848, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> J. Deroin, ‘Aux démocrates socialistes’, *L’Opinion des Femmes*, 10 April 1849, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Stern, *Histoire*, vol. 2, pp. 190–92. <sup>45</sup> Barni, *Morale*, p. 128.

<sup>46</sup> J. Adam, *Idées Anti-Proudhoniennes sur l’Amour, la Femme et le Mariage* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1858).

<sup>47</sup> J. Déjacque, ‘Discours de Joseph Déjacque’, *Almanach des Femmes pour 1854* (Paris: Imprimerie Universelle, 1854), p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> V. Hugo, *Actes et paroles*, 3 vols. (Paris: Lévy, 1875–6), vol. II, *Pendant l’exil, 1852–1870* (1875), p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Vacherot, *Démocratie*, pp. 130–1; J. Simon, *La Politique Radicale* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1868), p. 252.

<sup>50</sup> Blanc, ‘Le Divorce’ (15 October 1849) in *Questions*, vol. III, p. 141.

the Third Republic, the civil emancipation of women was touted by leading republicans as a key priority, including those like Edgar Quinet who did not support female suffrage.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, the Second Republic's official integration of France's colonies into the nation raised practical questions about the geographical and racial limits of republican citizenship.<sup>52</sup> Caribbean emancipation was accompanied by full citizenship and direct representation in France's legislature. Most of the newly enfranchised population in the French Caribbean embraced republican abolitionists like Schœlcher who favoured racial equality, compensation for former slaves, land redistribution, and the islands' assimilation into the political culture of mainland France. Louisy Mathieu, a former slave from Guadeloupe, shared these 'schœlcheriste' sympathies and was famously elected to France's Constituent Assembly where he sat on the republican left.<sup>53</sup> In Algeria, by contrast, the Provisional Government granted full citizenship and representation to the French settler community, the *colons*, but not to the native population. This disparity stemmed from republican hopes that settlement in Algeria could relieve poverty in France. Pierre Leroux pushed for 'republican communes' to build a 'new civilisation' in Algeria and journals like *La Feuille de Village* marvelled at 'a magnificent country which offers immense resources to [French] agriculture'.<sup>54</sup> The Constituent Assembly settled thousands in agricultural colonies where there was no place for native political participation.

Reaction after the June Days affected both regions. New colonial governors in the Caribbean tried to maintain white planters' economic predominance and prevented large-scale acquisitions of property by freed slaves, frustrating the 'schœlcheriste' vision of a racially egalitarian republican Caribbean.<sup>55</sup> Transportation to Algeria became a favourite method for France's increasingly conservative governments to dispose of political dissidents, resulting in an even more intensely republican settler society that competed for land and resources with indigenous Algerians and therefore 'combined an attachment to the Republic . . . with an inveterate

<sup>51</sup> E. Quinet, J. Grange (ed.), *La République: Conditions de la Régénération de la France* (Le Bord de l'eau, 2009), pp. 168–88.

<sup>52</sup> Cited in Luchaire, *Naissance*, pp. 224, 228, 238.

<sup>53</sup> N. Schmidt, 'Schœlcherisme et assimilation dans la politique coloniale française: de la théorie à la pratique aux Caraïbes entre 1848 et les années 1880', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 35 (1988), 305–40.

<sup>54</sup> Leroux quoted in Y. Katan, 'La seconde république et l'Algérie: une politique de peuplement?' in J.-L. Mayaud (ed.), *1848: Actes du Colloque International du Cent Cinquantenaire, Tenu à l'Assemblée Nationale à Paris, les 23–25 février 1998* (Paris: Créaphis, 2002), p. 390; 'Colonies agricoles de l'Algérie', *La Feuille de Village*, 25 October 1849, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> N. Schmidt, '1848 et les colonies: dimensions françaises, perspectives internationales' in Mayaud (ed.) *1848*, pp. 375–9.

hostility to the natives'.<sup>56</sup> This left a conflicted legacy after 1851. Some republicans claimed that abolition and the extension of citizenship in the Caribbean represented the republic's unique and 'solemn consecration of the equality of the races', a point underscored by republican promises to reverse the Second Empire's revocation of colonial representation in France's legislature.<sup>57</sup> Yet the situation in Algeria augured a more racialised republican colonialism, as did the popularity across the political spectrum of Arthur Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*.<sup>58</sup>

### III Anti-Bonapartism and the Shape of the Next Republic

Republicans were thrown into a second round of ideological introspection by Bonaparte's coup. This event unified republicans in antipathy to Napoleon III and prompted new criticisms of Bonapartism, which republicans now denounced as a despotic and violent creed, discarding their older view of it as a reasonably democratic standard-bearer of the values of 1789. To preclude a similar disaster from befalling a future republic, they sought to improve upon the constitution of 1848, more safely distributing power by curtailing the executive, enhancing legislative authority, and revivifying local political life.

Anti-Bonapartism unified republicans after 1851. This marked a significant break with the period before 1848, when the First Republic and First Empire were intertwined in public memory due to their mutual roots in the Revolution of 1789 and their interconnected wars against the monarchies of Europe in 1792–1815.<sup>59</sup> Many republicans welcomed Napoleon's return in 1815 as a liberation from Bourbon rule and these bonds were tightened by mutual persecution during the restoration's 'white terror' and participation in the Revolution of 1830.<sup>60</sup> The coup shattered these affinities and Napoleon III was excoriated as a perjurer for breaking his presidential oath to uphold the constitution of 1848. Countless texts, most famously *Les Châtiments* and *Napoléon le Petit*, noted the 1848 constitution's injunction to disobey the president if he dissolved the legislature and cast republican resistance in 1851 as a defence of legality against criminality. This became a vital aspect of

<sup>56</sup> Agulhon, *Experiment*, p. 110.

<sup>57</sup> Saint-Ferréol, *Réponse*, p. 36; J-B. Boichot, *La Question de Demain: Esquisse d'une Nouvelle Organisation Politique et Sociale* (Paris: Tous les Libraires, 1869), p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> P. Darriulat, *Les Patriotes: La Gauche Républicaine et la Nation, 1830–1870* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 235.

<sup>59</sup> A. Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars: The Nation-in-Arms in French Republican Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), ch. 3.

<sup>60</sup> R. S. Alexander, 'Restoration republicanism reconsidered', *French History* 8 (1994), 452–55.

republican memory, expanded upon by Ténor's historical research and Léon Gambetta's oratory.<sup>61</sup> The Second Empire's repressive domestic policies and wars in the Crimea, Italy, and Mexico proved the regime's wickedness and retrospectively tarnished the First Empire. 'Far from being the messiahs of liberty' both Bonapartes 'were only restorers and continuators of monarchical despotism'.<sup>62</sup> And both brought disaster, with the Franco-Prussian War marking the third time in 'less than sixty years' that Napoleonic foreign policy had left France invaded, defeated, and reduced in size.<sup>63</sup>

That such a regime claimed to emanate from national sovereignty, based on the use of universal suffrage in the 1851 and 1852 plebiscites that officially established the empire, galled republicans. They attacked the plebiscites as unfree votes, taking place during the repression that followed the coup. Moreover, the claim to have secured a democratic mandate for the Bonaparte family's perpetual rule was nonsensical. 'It is absurd that the national will of to-day should be called upon to destroy the national will of to-morrow, and that the sovereignty of the people should be forfeited by an act of the sovereignty of the people.'<sup>64</sup> Constitutional questions could be legitimately posed only by 'the freely elected representatives of the people'.<sup>65</sup> Some argued that plebiscites were inherently illegitimate since the national will was too complex to be 'imprison[ed] between a "yes" and a "no"'.<sup>66</sup> Elections for the imperial legislature, with the regime selecting, financing, and campaigning for loyal 'official candidates', were a similar travesty of democracy. Some republican candidates could still win in such conditions, and from 1857 a republican parliamentary opposition emerged engaging in peaceful resistance to the regime. But others refused any compromise with the empire, and suspended their legalistic scruples of 1848. Republican theorists like Barni reaffirmed the right of armed resistance to tyranny, and figures like Madier de Montjau and Félix Pyat explicitly sanctioned 'tyrannicide' to reclaim national sovereignty, as did those involved in the failed attempt on Napoleon III's life in 1858.<sup>67</sup>

The destruction of the Second Republic by its own president revived republican distrust of executive power. Under the constitutions of 1793

<sup>61</sup> Ténor, *Province and Paris en Décembre 1851: Étude Historique sur le Coup d'État* (Paris: Le Chevalier, 1868); Gambetta, *Discours*, vol. I, pp. 1–89.

<sup>62</sup> P. Vésinier, *La Vie du Nouveau César: Étude Historique* (Paris: Vésinier, 1865), pp. vi–vii.

<sup>63</sup> J. Barni, *Ce que doit être la République* (Union Républicaine de la Somme, 1872), pp. 32–33.

<sup>64</sup> Blanc, 1848, p. 496. <sup>65</sup> Gambetta, *Discours*, vol. I, p. 206.

<sup>66</sup> L. Blanc, 'Du plébiscite impérial' (1870), in *Questions*, vol. II (1874), p. 259.

<sup>67</sup> Barni, *Morale*, p. 116; G. Weill, *Histoire du Parti Républicain en France (1814–1870)* (Paris: Alcan, 1928), p. 297.

and 1795 the executive had been selected by the legislature, but the need in 1848 to disavow the terror led many, particularly *républicains du lendemain* like Alexis de Tocqueville, to endorse an independent executive as a check on the passions of a democratically elected legislature. Lamartine hoped that a directly elected president would bind France's newly enfranchised citizens to the republic by letting them select a highly visible figure of national importance.<sup>68</sup> But others objected that having two directly elected and coequal branches of government essentially divided national sovereignty, producing inevitable crises over the location of legitimate authority.<sup>69</sup> With this premonition vindicated in 1851, few republicans denied the need to weaken the next republic's executive by ensuring that it was drawn from, or at least unambiguously subordinate to, the legislature.<sup>70</sup> Precautions were also needed to prevent executive abuse of powerful state institutions. The coup had shown that 'with a standing army in the hands of the executive power, liberty in a country becomes impossible'.<sup>71</sup> Many republicans instead favoured militias, often pointing to Switzerland as a model. Dependent upon the 'democratic and non-permanent' service of the entire citizenry, militias could not easily be turned against the nation, especially if their full mobilisation could only be triggered by special legislation during an invasion of France.<sup>72</sup> The co-operation of magistrates in persecuting republicans after 1851 warned against tight executive control of the judiciary, and many republicans therefore advocated the election of judges and insisted on the guarantee of trial by independent jury.<sup>73</sup>

Republicans instead advocated legislative primacy. The legislature was the truest repository of national sovereignty, an assembly sanctioned by universal suffrage and consisting of many members that collectively reflected France's diverse range of interests and opinions. To prevent the division of sovereignty, the legislature must also be unicameral. Britain's and America's bicameralism were inapplicable, as France had neither a hereditary aristocracy nor semi-sovereign constituent parts needing separate representation. Appeals to France's 'democratic unity' ensured that a unicameral legislature was overwhelmingly voted into the

<sup>68</sup> Jennings, *Revolution*, pp. 83–95. <sup>69</sup> Blanc, 1848, pp. 410–11.

<sup>70</sup> J. Simon, *La Liberté Politique* (Paris: Hachette, 1859), pp. 176–7; Vacherot, *Démocratie*, p. 360.

<sup>71</sup> V. Schœlcher, *Histoire des Crimes du deux Décembre* (London: Chapman, 1852), p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> Alfieri, 'De l'Armée', *L'Homme*, 20 September 1854, p. 3; H. Marlet, 'La France et la révolution', *L'Homme*, 3 and 10 January 1855, pp. 2–4; Boichot, *Question de demain*, pp. 42–89; 'Programme de Belleville' in J. Tallandier (ed.), *Gambetta en 1869* (Paris: Tallandier, 1904), p. 91; Simon, *Politique*, p. 181.

<sup>73</sup> Barni, *Morale*, pp. 145, 183–4; Hugo, *Napoleon*, p. 208; Quinet, *République*, pp. 198–9; Vacherot, *Démocratie*, pp. 366–83.



constitution of 1848. The example of the Second Empire's legislature strengthened these convictions. Its weak, directly elected legislative body merely approved or rejected bills instigated by the emperor and constitutional review was undertaken by a senate made up of cardinals, military officers, and imperial life appointees. The results were predictable and republicans consistently called for a unicameral and supreme legislature throughout the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>74</sup> Some also proposed electoral reform to more accurately interpret the national will. Blanc saw the Party of Order's reign as an object lesson in the dangers of repressive majoritarianism, endorsing Thomas Hare's system of proportional representation, introduced to him by John Stuart Mill, which he hoped 'would assure the representation, in numerical proportion, of each section of the electorate'.<sup>75</sup> This inspired similar proposals from other reformers, such as Maria Chenu's plan to divide France into multi-member districts, and apportion seats to well-defined parties based on their shares of the vote.<sup>76</sup>

The Second Empire's centralism, including the weakening of municipal councils and abolition of Paris' and Lyon's local governments, led many republicans to embrace decentralisation as a bulwark against tyranny. Some, inspired by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, advocated federalist systems in which communes would become the key political communities, sovereign in their own affairs and bound to the national whole only through contractual and voluntary association.<sup>77</sup> Yet many republicans feared that this would lead to national disintegration and could countenance only 'administrative decentralisation'.<sup>78</sup> Most fell between these two poles and 'argued for the democratic self-government of the commune within the framework of a politically centralised state'.<sup>79</sup> Weakening central authority would disperse power and thereby preclude despotism, with Simon proclaiming that 'liberty is virtually a synonym of decentralisation; they are both products of the disarmament of central power'.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, a vibrant local political life would engage France's citizenry, providing crucial practice in the democratic process.<sup>81</sup> By the end of the Second Empire, support for decentralisation was a fixture of

<sup>74</sup> Hazareesingh, *Founders*, p. 139; Jennings, *Revolution*, pp. 82, 92–93; Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicain*, pp. 146, 156; Vacherot, *Démocratie* pp. 344–56.

<sup>75</sup> L. Blanc, 'De la représentation proportionnelle des minorités' (1864) in *Questions*, vol. I, pp. 254–55.

<sup>76</sup> M. Chenu, *Le Droit des Minorités, Leur Avènement Politique* (Paris: Degorce-Cadot, 1868); V. Guillin and D. Souafa, 'The reception of John Stuart Mill in France: Concerning Mill's On Representative Government', A. Goldhammer (trans.) ([www.booksandideas.net](http://www.booksandideas.net), first published 13 April 2011), 3–8.

<sup>77</sup> Hazareesingh, *Subject*, pp. 281–87.

<sup>78</sup> Blanc, 'L'État et la Commune' (1866), in *Questions*, vol. I, 257–318.

<sup>79</sup> Hazareesingh, *Subject*, pp. 287–88. <sup>80</sup> Simon, *Liberté*, p. 223.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279; Vacherot, *Démocratie*, p. 309.



republican thought, with the famous Belleville republican programme listing 'universal suffrage for the election of mayors and municipal councils' as its first demand.<sup>82</sup>

#### IV Republicanising France

The Second Republic's difficulties ran deeper than faulty institutions or Bonaparte's duplicity. Too many French citizens were indifferent or hostile to republican institutions, as shown by the elections of December 1848 and May 1849. Republicans therefore advocated education and the development of new systems of morality, which would together inculcate the values of independence and selflessness necessary for the next republic's survival.

In 1848, the Provisional Government declared that universal suffrage made universal instruction 'a civic duty', but its plans to expand education were cancelled by succeeding governments.<sup>83</sup> Republicans largely blamed their subsequent electoral defeats on ignorance as uneducated voters deferred to local, usually anti-republican, elites or were overawed by the Napoleonic legend.<sup>84</sup> Experience had definitively shown that democracy 'cannot survive without universal instruction'.<sup>85</sup> Universal education would be free, a key point of republican social policy, and compulsory, so that parents could not deny their children the benefits of enlightenment for the short-term economic rewards of child labour.<sup>86</sup> Republican groups like Jean Macé's *Ligue de l'Enseignement* lobbied vigorously for education reform along these lines.<sup>87</sup> The republican vision of education was not merely to impart specific subject knowledge, but to craft well-rounded individuals capable of taking informed and independent decisions in exercising the suffrage. School curricula were to include scientific, philosophical, historical, and physical education and adults would be intellectually stimulated by a free press, academic and vocational courses, and active cultural institutions. In sum, 'It is education which transforms a child into a man and a citizen.'<sup>88</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Gildea, *Children*, pp. 89–90; 'Programme de Belleville', 89.

<sup>83</sup> H. Carnot, *Le Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Cultes, Depuis le 24 Février jusqu'au 5 juillet 1848* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1848), p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Blanc, 1848, pp. 363, 384; E. Quinet, *L'Enseignement du Peuple* (Paris: Chamerot, 1850), ch. 1; Ténnot, *Suffrage*, pp. 11–14.

<sup>85</sup> Barni, *Morale*, p. 22. <sup>86</sup> Simon, *Politique*, ch. 4; Vacherot, *Démocratie*, p. 284.

<sup>87</sup> P. Stock-Morton, *Moral Education for a Secular Society: The Development of Morale Laïque in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 73–74.

<sup>88</sup> Vacherot, *Démocratie*, p. 139.

Most agreed that the Catholic Church could play no official role in this transformation, and republican thought after 1851 was increasingly anti-clerical. This was a major change from the 1830s and 1840s when republican socialists couched their arguments in the language of popular Christianity and promised the temporal enactment of Jesus' fraternal love.<sup>89</sup> The Catholic Church raised hopes of a religiously sanctioned republic by denouncing the July Monarchy's materialism and publicly welcoming 1848 as a chance to found a more ethical regime. Yet this rapprochement quickly crumbled as most clergy, fearing disorder and radicalism, swung behind the Party of Order and Bonaparte, thanking God for the coup as a deliverance from social disorder. For this support the church received increased clerical salaries and privileged places in the imperial senate and education system. A few republicans hoped that a church disabused of its political ambition might provide a moral foundation for the next republic,<sup>90</sup> but most now thought that the church's actions and dogmatic insistence on deference to the clergy showed that 'Despotism and Catholicism are brothers.'<sup>91</sup> A secularised republican future would see the 'priest, excluded from all functions, except those of the Church', and church-state separation would result in 'Free churches in a free state'.<sup>92</sup>

Yet the next republic would need an ethical mooring if its citizens were to dispassionately prioritise national well-being over their own selfish interests. Republicans therefore sought to articulate a new republican morality, a process which produced some of 'the most original' thinking of the era.<sup>93</sup> Some searched for religious alternatives to Catholicism. Hippolyte Carnot, Jules Favre, Eugène Pelletan, and Henri Martin thought that Protestantism's emphases on individual conscience and independent textual reflection could inculcate republican values.<sup>94</sup> Alphonse Esquiros, who spent time in exile in Britain and the Netherlands, pointedly noted that representative government was flourishing 'in almost all those states which belong to the Reformed Churches; whilst up to the present time nothing of the same kind is to be seen in Catholic nations'.<sup>95</sup> Quinet argued that only a religious reformation would break the despotic intolerance that had characterised both French Catholicism and antithetical theocracies like the Jacobin Cult of

<sup>89</sup> Berenson, *Populist Religion*, ch. 2.

<sup>90</sup> P. Buchez, *Traité de Politique et de Science Sociale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Amyot, 1866).

<sup>91</sup> Vacherot, *Démocratie*, p. xxvii.

<sup>92</sup> Hugo, *Napoleon*, pp. 207–8; Simon, *Politique*, p. 43.

<sup>93</sup> Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicain*, p. 152.

<sup>94</sup> Hazareesingh, *Subject*, p. 255; J. Tchernoff, *Le Parti Républicain au Coup d'État et sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Pedone, 1906), p. 307.

<sup>95</sup> A. Esquiros, *Religious Life in England* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867), p. vi.

the Supreme Being.<sup>96</sup> But France's Protestant population, though disproportionately republican, was small, and the mass religious conversion of France was a distant prospect. Meanwhile, much of French intellectual life was increasingly critical of all revealed religion. In 1838, Émile Littré translated David Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu*, which saw Jesus as a historical, not divine, figure. Free-thought societies flourished in France after the February Revolution and continued in exile after the coup, and by the 1860s journals like *La Libre Pensée* were promoting the works of eighteenth-century materialist atheists like Denis Diderot and the Baron d'Holbach. There was also much interest in historical free-thinkers, Charles Darwin's work, and Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, an account similar to Strauss's.<sup>97</sup> It therefore seemed possible and desirable to ground republican virtues in a secular '*morale indépendante*'.

Kantian philosophy provided a strong basis for this. Immanuel Kant held that humans' possession of free wills made them agents deserving of treatment as moral ends, never simply as means. Morality thus entailed guaranteeing a sphere of liberty for each, though Kant thought that individuals flourished best by interacting with others in society. Representative government would combine individuals' rights to live under their own will with the need to adjudicate inevitable social disputes.<sup>98</sup> This basing of political morality on observations of human nature rather than supernatural dictates was embraced by 'neo-Kantian' French republicans. Barni translated much of Kant's work in the 1840s and 1850s, a process that turned him into both a free-thinker and a republican, and explicitly acknowledged the influence of the 'grand moralist' in the secular nature of his own political and moral philosophy.<sup>99</sup> Charles Renouvier also turned to Kant after the fall of the Second Republic convinced him 'that the philosophy of the Republic had to be grounded on more than vague humanitarian sentiment', leading in 1869 to his influential *La Science de la Morale*, which laid out rational bases of morality, and proposed a secular system of rights and duties for individuals and society.<sup>100</sup>

The continuing development of science also seemed to confirm that human nature, and therefore morality, could be known and quantified, making morality itself a science, albeit one in its infancy. Vacherot, who in

<sup>96</sup> E. Quinet, *La Révolution* (Paris: Lacroix, 1865).

<sup>97</sup> J. Barni, *Les Martyrs de la Libre Pensée* (Paris: Principaux Libraires, 1862); Jennings, *Revolution*, p. 371; J. Lalouette, *La Libre Pensée en France, 1848–1940* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997), pp. 25–39; Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicaine*, pp. 150–51.

<sup>98</sup> I. Kant, *Political Writings*, H. Reiss (ed.) and H. B. Nisbet (trans.), 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>99</sup> Hazareesingh, *Founders*, p. 278; Barni, *Morale*, pp. vi–vii.

<sup>100</sup> Jennings, *Revolution*, p. 60.

1855 wrote for the rationalist newspaper *L'Avenir*, later argued that morality 'is a veritable science founded on facts of a special and delicate type, but still on facts capable of being noted and observed'.<sup>101</sup> Similar arguments appeared in the *Morale Indépendante* newspaper, where Barni, Renouvier, Henri Massol, and the science writer Amédée Guillemin maintained that morality, like any other science, was a question of 'deducing the laws' which governed 'established, measured' phenomena in the natural world.<sup>102</sup>

The most famous effort to wed scientifically grounded secular morality with republican politics was attempted by positivist philosophy. From the 1820s, Auguste Comte held that human knowledge passed from a theological (or fictional) through a metaphysical (or abstract) to a positive (or scientific) state. Humanity was fitfully moving towards positive self-knowledge, aided by social science, and Comteans hoped to complete this transformation by constructing an empiricist and technocratic 'positive politics'.<sup>103</sup> Hoping that the republic offered the chance to construct such a polity, in 1848 Comte founded a *Société Positiviste* and published a *Discours sur l'Ensemble du Positivisme*. But the republic's chaotic failure caused Comte to welcome Napoleon III as a stabilising force who would allow social progress, and in the 1850s he articulated a vision of the positivist future which many erstwhile supporters found prescriptive and authoritarian. This led to a break with his disciple Littré, who rejected the coup as a criminal act and crafted a republicanised version of positivism during the 1850s and 1860s. For Littré, human progress relied upon open discussion maintained by free speech, a free press, and free assembly, institutions only respected by republics. The French populace of 1848 had been unprepared for progress, but patiently building support, establishing popular education, and securing a republic, preferably through peaceful reform rather than violent revolution, could guarantee 'order and progress' and shepherd in the positivist era.<sup>104</sup> This vision found important support among republicans. *L'Homme* took the motto '*Science et solidarité*' and acknowledged its debt to the 'learned and clear works of doctor Littré'.<sup>105</sup> Gambetta and

<sup>101</sup> Vacherot, *Démocratie*, p. 66.

<sup>102</sup> A. Guillemin, 'La morale n'est-elle qu'une science?', *La Morale indépendante*, 10 September 1865, p. 42.

<sup>103</sup> A. Comte, *Early Political Writings*, H. S. Jones (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>104</sup> Hazareesingh, *Founders*, pp. 40–43; Jennings, *Revolution*, pp. 360–62; C. B. Welch, 'Social science from the French Revolution to positivism' in G. Stedman Jones and G. Claeys (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 194–96.

<sup>105</sup> P. Bonnet-Duverdier, 'Science et socialisme', *L'Homme*, 18 January 1854, p. 2.

Jules Ferry also read Littré's work, and later in the 1860s collaborated with him at the journal *La Philosophie positive*.<sup>106</sup> They imbibed his belief in gradual progress and aversion to instability, forging a republican politics that was willing to negotiate in order to secure essential, republica-nising reforms.<sup>107</sup> Positivist republicanism therefore did not directly endorse Comte's political system, but adopted Littré's 'selective and creative' refashioning of it, embracing a patient, compromising, but progressive political style underpinned, like so much republicanism in this era, by 'an anticlerical agnosticism, the cult of science, and certainty that it was through education ... that universal suffrage would be able ... to establish a viable republic'.<sup>108</sup>

## V Republican Nationalism and Internationalism

Finally, the international context of 1848–51, with exultant optimism during the 'springtime of the peoples' giving way to reaction and the successive destruction of Europe's revolutionary regimes, greatly impacted French republicanism. Earlier confidence in France's ability, either through military intervention or pure moral example, to pull Europe into a republican future was shaken by the use of French troops to destroy the Roman Republic and France's own eventual collapse into demagoguery. Building a republican future seemed to require more active international collaboration, and many republicans now renounced their previous parochialism, rejected of wars of conquest and militarism, and looked forward to schemes of supranational republican organisation guaranteeing freedom in France and across the continent.

Before 1848, many republicans fondly remembered the revolutionary expansionism of the First Republic, which set France's 'natural' frontier at the Rhine, Alps, and Pyrenees, and established subservient 'sister republics' throughout its European conquests. Historians like Jules Michelet and Quinet theorised that France was specially chosen to deliver its neighbours from tyranny, and republican newspapers confidently informed foreign democrats that French expansionism was in their interests.<sup>109</sup> Though some, like François-Vincent Raspail, questioned the ethics of natural frontiers and wars of liberation, the Provisional Government in 1848 had to tread a course between the passions of republican patriotism and the need to reassure European governments

<sup>106</sup> J.-M. Mayeur, *Léon Gambetta: La Patrie et la République* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), pp. 42–5; Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicain*, ch. 6.

<sup>107</sup> Tchernoff, *Parti Républicain*, p. 300.

<sup>108</sup> Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicain*, p. 156; Welch, 'Social science', 197.

<sup>109</sup> Jennings, *Revolution*, pp. 207–10, 220–28; Weill, *Histoire*, p. 29.

of its pacific intentions. As foreign minister Lamartine reserved France's right to spread republicanism through 'honest proselytism', but committed to foreign intervention only when 'legitimate movements' of democracy and national self-determination were clearly violated by outside powers.<sup>110</sup> The constitution of 1848 echoed his stance, stating the republic's respect for foreign nationalities and foreswearing 'wars of conquest' and acts 'against the liberty of any people'.<sup>111</sup>

The need for such assurances evaporated as revolution swept across Europe in 1848, unaided by French arms. It suddenly seemed that 'quarrels can no longer exist' between international 'compatriots of the universal *patrie* of *fraternité*'. Rather, widespread imitation of the February Revolution proved that France's role was now as a moral exemplar and 'the guide, the father, the initiator of the new world'.<sup>112</sup> This confidence collapsed as Europe's revolutionary regimes faltered from mid-1848. Troops of the French Republic even assisted this reactionary resurgence when Bonaparte ordered the invasion of the nascent Roman Republic in 1849, hoping to shore up his support with French Catholics by restoring papal temporal authority in Rome. Although republicans vociferously denounced this act, many regretted that they had not done more to save the 'springtime of the peoples'.<sup>113</sup> The Second Republic had 'wasted its first days in celebrations, ovations, and internal quarrelling', thereby isolating Europe's revolutions and 'one by one the peoples fell' until the Second Republic itself was destroyed.<sup>114</sup>

Assumptions of French primacy therefore seemed increasingly absurd. Republicans began to regret the doctrine of natural frontiers and the conquests of the 1790s, with Pelletan mocking the belief 'that the best way to teach a Thuringian peasant the rights of man must be to set fire to his shack and steal his hen or his pig'.<sup>115</sup> Instead of French messianism, republicans advocated genuine and sustained international collaboration. Organisations like the London-based Central Committee of European Democracy, founded by Ledru-Rollin, Albert Darasz, Lajos Kossuth, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Arnold Ruge, sought to reverse the failures of 1848 by opposing the 'holy alliance of kings [with] the holy alliance of the Peoples'.<sup>116</sup> The International Association, which brought together

<sup>110</sup> Lamartine, *Histoire*, vol. II, pp. 32–39. <sup>111</sup> Cited in Luchaire, *Naissance*, p. 220.

<sup>112</sup> Darriulat, *Patriotes*, p. 188.

<sup>113</sup> E. Quinet, *La Croisade Autrichienne, Française, Napolitaine, Espagnol contre la République Romaine* (Paris: Chamerot, 1849); Ledru-Rollin, *Le 13 juin* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 1849).

<sup>114</sup> Ribeyrolles, 'Solidarité', *L'Homme*, 30 November 1853, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> Cited in Hazareesingh, *Founders*, p. 195; Barni, *Morale*, pp. 223–24; Darriulat, *Patriotes*, pp. 245–46.

<sup>116</sup> Ledru-Rollin, *Discours*, vol. 2, pp. 411–12.

French, German, and Polish socialists with internationally minded British Chartists, issued a quadrilingual newspaper. Throughout the 1850s, these and similar organisations founded international networks dedicated to revolutionary activity and were important precursors to the more famous, but more ideologically heterogeneous, International Working Men's Association. In the 1860s the International League for Peace and Liberty, run by Barni and counting among its founding members Blanc, Carnot, Favre, Ferry, Hugo, Littré, Quinet, Schœlcher, and Simon, urged the pacification of international relations, especially in its newspaper *Les États-Unis d'Europe*. It linked support for republicanism, liberty, national militias, international federation, and peace and couched them as the collective antithesis of despotism, militarism, national chauvinism, and war.<sup>117</sup>

A peaceful international republican future would require international institutions. *L'Homme* called for a 'central Republic of federated and free states' held together by a 'tribunal of arbitration for the great international disputes'.<sup>118</sup> Barni, following Kant, thought that international peace could only be maintained by a 'juridical state which would be for [nations] what a civil state is for individuals'. Since individual treaties could be broken and despotism was animated by a conquering spirit, this must be a 'permanent association' of republican states.<sup>119</sup> Jean-Baptiste Boichot thought that Switzerland, a linguistically diverse federation, offered a 'model in miniature of the grand confederation which should unite all the peoples of Europe' through a supranational elected assembly and common policies on infrastructure, communication, and defence.<sup>120</sup> Others went further, advocating a *république universelle*, a sometimes vague and certainly distant ambition onto which all the various hopes of the republican movement could be projected. For the International Association, it must be a 'universal, democratic and social republic', enfranchising both men and women.<sup>121</sup> Amédée Saint-Ferréol proposed a chain of politics running from the commune through intermediary nation states to the European *république universelle*.<sup>122</sup> For Hugo, the United States of Europe would be governed by an assembly elected by 'the universal suffrage of all the peoples of the continent', including women, that convened in Paris 'known henceforth as the City of

<sup>117</sup> Barni, *Morale*, pp. 259–66; K. Grün, 'Armées permanentes ou milices', *Les États-Unis d'Europe*, 19 and 26 January and 2, 9, 16, and 23 February 1868.

<sup>118</sup> Ribeyrolles, 'Le devoir républicain', *L'Homme*, 3 May 1854, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> Barni, *Morale*, pp. 233–46. <sup>120</sup> Boichot, *Question de Demain*, pp. 39–43.

<sup>121</sup> 'Rapport annuel du comité internationale à tous les nationalités' and 'Manifeste du comité internationale', in Lehning, *International*, appendices 5 and 8, 252, 268–69.

<sup>122</sup> Saint-Ferréol, *Réponse*, p. 59.



Europe'. This assembly would eliminate trade barriers, issue a common European currency, and supply work, education, and welfare. Citizens across the continent would enjoy freedom of movement and guaranteed rights of association, property, press, and speech. National animosities, even identities, would melt away and 'Germany would be to France, France would be to Italy, what today Normandy is to Picardy and Picardy is to Lorraine'.<sup>123</sup>

## VI Conclusion

The aftermath of the Second Empire's collapse reflected these developments in republican political thought. The Paris Commune of March–May 1871, foreshadowed in commemorative parades on 24 February, proclaimed republican governance; free, compulsory, and secular education; the separation of church and state; the supplanting of the regular army by the citizens' national guard; autonomy for Paris and 'all localities in France'; the dismantling of Napoleonic symbols like the Vendôme column; and the official promotion of co-operative enterprise. Yet the Commune's existence challenged the rule of the Third Republic's democratically elected national assembly, leading to republican divisions and ambivalence during the conflict between these two authorities, with direct parallels to June 1848.<sup>124</sup>

The Third Republic's foundation, in which many veterans of 1848–51 participated, was also marked by memories of the Second Republic. Its constitutional laws of 1875 were the result of compromise, led by positivist 'opportunist' republicans, with moderate monarchists. The existence of a president with significant powers and a bicameral legislature upset many but were ultimately accepted as compatible with republican ideals. Legislative selection of the president and indirect election of the Senate ensured that neither could challenge the democratic legitimacy of the directly elected Chamber of Deputies. The 'seize mai' clash between the president and deputies in 1877 soon confirmed the constitutional supremacy of the lower chamber. Decisive republican electoral victories in the late 1870s were facilitated by addressing republican principles to rural needs, a strategy disproportionately successful in areas of former *démocratie* strength. This led to republican ministries in the 1880s enacting long-standing republican goals. Restrictions on the press, assembly, and workers' associations were abolished. Sunday work was allowed and the

<sup>123</sup> V. Hugo, *Anniversaire de la Révolution de 1848. 24 février 1855- A Jersey* (Paris: Imprimerie Universelle, 1855), pp. 2–5.

<sup>124</sup> R. Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871* (London: Longman, 1999).



Catholic Church lost its exclusive grip on graveyards, funerals, and hospitals. Divorce was legalised and women's secondary education expanded. Municipal governments were strengthened and elected mayors restored, except in Paris. Major public works were initiated, and modest tax reform enacted. Colonial expansion accelerated in Africa and Asia at the natives' expense, though full citizenship and representation had been restored to the Caribbean. Most famously, a system of free, compulsory, and secular education was created to 'provide a foundation for social progress, to give the Republic roots and to liberate consciences'.<sup>125</sup>

More generally, workers' co-operatives long remained the key to social emancipation for socialist and non-socialist republicans alike.<sup>126</sup> The alliance of socially conscious republicans and democratically inclined socialists pioneered by the *démoc-socs* became a recurring feature in France's political landscape, prefiguring later, more successful coalitions of republican defence, from the fin-de-siècle *Bloc des Gauches* to the Popular Front of the 1930s. Conversely, pacifistic anti-militarism declined after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the creation of a citizens' army through universal conscription, and anticlericalism was less salient after the secularising measures of the 1880s. But both resurged dramatically during the Dreyfus affair, which saw renewed calls for 'democratic' militias, official efforts to republicanise the officer corps, and the final separation of church and state.

The richness of this inheritance shows the significance of 1848 on French republicanism's development. Republicans responded to the tumult of 1848 by staking strong claims for the viability and desirability of republican institutions and by crafting a new ideological synthesis designed to broaden their popular appeal. This capacity for innovative self-correction was therefore clear before the end of 1848 and fully displayed after 1851 as republicans attempted to envision a new order that was simultaneously loyal to the accomplishments of 1848 and immune to the plights of the Second Republic. Republicans carried their conclusions forward into the Third Republic and passed them on to subsequent generations, including the pragmatic positivists often held to have supplanted them. This combination of determination and flexibility helps explain republicanism's continuing vitality after the disappointments of 1848 and eventual emergence as the ruling ideology of France.

<sup>125</sup> J-M Mayeur and M. Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War, 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chs. 1 and 3.

<sup>126</sup> M. Adler-Gillies, 'Co-operation or Collectivism: the contest for meaning in the French socialist movement, 1870–90', *French History* 28 (2014), 385–405.

## 4 Socialist Visions of Direct Democracy

### The Mid-Century Crisis of Popular Sovereignty and the Constitutional Legacy of the Jacobins

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*Anne-Sophie Chambost*

In March 1848, the ‘Electoral Manifesto’ of Victor Considerant’s newspaper, *La Démocratie Pacifique*, boldly announced: ‘The Republic of 1792 destroyed the old order. The Republic of 1848 must reconstruct the new order.’<sup>1</sup> The proclamation was quite characteristic of its time. The intense debates about the idea of republican government during the 1848–52 period frequently referred back to the precedent of the first, albeit aborted, attempt to put into place a regime of genuine republican rule by ‘the people’. Indeed, long before the February Revolution, and before even the declaration of the First Republic, Maximilien Robespierre, among others, had already succinctly posited many of the problems associated with representing popular sovereignty, underscoring difficulties which would return with a vengeance in France during the Second Republic:

Is the law the expression of the general will, when the largest number of those for whom it was made cannot participate in any way in its elaboration? . . . Is the nation sovereign when the largest numbers of individuals composing it are divested of those political rights constitutive of sovereignty? . . . [L]iberty consists of obeying those laws which one gives oneself and servitude of being constrained to submit oneself to a foreign will.<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth socialist imaginary, the sorts of problems addressed by Robespierre in April 1791 haunted thinking about the practicability of popular sovereignty and the difficulties associated with establishing any normative constitutional consensus. After the proclamation of the French First Republic in September 1792, the question quickly arose as to how to put popular sovereignty into practice. In Article 19 of his Declaration of Rights, Robespierre noted that ‘the law must especially

<sup>1</sup> The *Manifeste Électoral* was published as a supplement to the 29 February–1 March 1848 issue of *La Démocratie Pacifique*.

<sup>2</sup> Robespierre, *Pour le Bonheur et pour la Liberté: Discours* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000), pp. 74–75.

protect public and individual liberty from the authority of those who govern'.<sup>3</sup> 'Any institution', he added, 'which does not suppose the People good and the magistracy corruptible is abnormal.'<sup>4</sup> The tone was much less categorical in the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 24 June 1793, in which it was stated in Article 29 that each citizen 'has an equal right to participate in the elaboration of the law and the nomination of his representatives or officials'.<sup>5</sup> With regard to the exact modes of exercise of popular sovereignty, the *Montagnard* constitution allowed for popular participation in primary cantonal assemblies, although the chief legislative body alone would propose the laws. The absence of popular legislative initiative on a national level could be justified by a strict reading of Rousseau, for whom '[b]y itself the people always wills the good, but by itself it does not always see it', and it was Robespierre, in an attack on Jacques-Pierre Brissot, who added the qualification that 'the representatives of the people often see the good but do not always want it'.<sup>6</sup> In Articles 54 and 55, the 1793 constitution distinguished 'laws' from 'decrees', fixing their respective domains. Laws that were 'proposed' by representatives were to be sent to the communes for their ratification: they were considered legitimate if, within a delay of forty days, at least one-tenth of the primary assemblies in half the administrative departments plus one did not officially pronounce themselves against the law (in which case the primary assemblies would be convoked by the chief legislature).

The 1793 constitution was never put into practice, leaving posterity with the impression that, once in power, the Jacobins wanted to rid themselves of the political constraints of popular democracy, the promise of which, of course, had been largely responsible for their factional ascendancy. Although the genuine constitutional intentions of the various members of the *Montagne* remain unclear to this day, because they chose to shelve their constitution until an unspecified future date when France would no longer be at war, their constitution was never tarnished by those practical difficulties which have confronted other revolutionary constitutions. Preserved in all its theoretical purity, the 1793 constitution was thus capable of inspiring many French socialists concerned with the practicability of popular sovereignty and the concomitant difficulty of finding mechanisms for elaborating shared political norms during the first half of

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.      <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in L. Jaume (ed.), *Les Déclarations des Droits de l'homme: Du Débat 1789–1793 au Préambule de 1946* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> Robespierre, *Pour le Bonheur*, p. 147. For the Rousseau quote, from the *Contrat Social*, see Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 68.

the nineteenth century. Indeed, this selective memory of the constitution of 1793 perfectly illustrates the manner in which the French Revolution became a reference point for nineteenth-century contemporaries, who did not hesitate to compare their own actions to those of the major actors of the late eighteenth century, regardless of whether they wanted to avoid a new revolution or prolong the earlier one. The French revolutionary inheritance was integrated within more general assertions about the meaning of history in successive nineteenth-century rejoinders to the events of the previous century published unabated well up until through the 1890s. As nineteenth-century contemporaries' references to France's revolutionary past progressively lost any bearing with prior historical realities, political discourse was invariably inscribed within larger unwieldy narratives of change and becoming which contemporaries struggled to control as they superimposed such meta-narratives onto current events. Contemporaries sought both to measure the exact rupture provoked by the events of the French Revolution and to read into those events different stages which could then be inscribed within a much larger narrative of the post-revolutionary unfolding and flourishing of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Thus, contrary to the assertions of the Provisional Consuls of 19 Brumaire Year 8 (10 November 1799), the French Revolution continued throughout the nineteenth century: it lived on as a perpetual present for many contemporaries, even if its evocation was subject to perpetual revision in accordance with political expediency.<sup>7</sup> The French socialists and radicals who are the subject of this chapter were no exception in this regard. Although they shared a common dream of fostering a more fully emancipated post-revolutionary society based on a restructuring of the division of labour, they fought with each other in innumerable polemics over the ends and means of revolutionary political action, voluntarily integrating historical references to the constitution of 1793, within their projects of emancipation. Whereas today, the Jacobins – in either their representational theories or their concrete policies – cannot be thought proleptically to have been 'socialists', in the highly partisan distortions of nineteenth-century socialist mirrors, they often appeared like democrats, fervently devoted to the sovereign people's cause.<sup>8</sup> For French socialists of this later era, the obvious interpretative problems posed by recourse to historical anachronism was a non-issue, since one of their chief narrative preoccupations was how to articulate the future

<sup>7</sup> See the collection of essays by S. Wahnich (ed.), *Histoire d'un Trésor Perdu: Transmettre la Révolution Française* (Paris: Les Prairies Ordinaires, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> And this despite the fact the Jacobins overwhelmingly sought to legitimate the principle of private property and generally favoured moral and legal over genuine social equality.

socialist revolution with the antecedent world-historical revolution which had occurred in the late eighteenth century with France at its epicentre. This descriptive task seemingly only could be accomplished either if the incipient socialist revolution was inscribed in the continuous wake of the French Revolution, or, alternatively (as Marx negatively implied in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*), if socialism broke altogether with the idea of revolutionary repetition. In the resultant game of continuity and supersession, reference to the unpractised ideals embodied in the 1793 constitution – notably those associated with what later came to be termed ‘direct democracy’ – frequently served nineteenth-century French socialists as a foil to the regular confiscation of popular sovereignty by the forces of political reaction in their own day. Struck by the disparity between the representation of ‘the people’ in theory and their actual figuration as the result of electoral outcomes, French socialists struggled simultaneously both to interpret and advocate the expression of popular will. If their attempts to inhabit the conceptual space of this disparity are inscribed within the larger history of the successive appropriations of France’s revolutionary past, the political experience of the Second Republic undeniably marked a turning point, effecting much more than how the most radical moments of the French Revolution were subsequently understood, but, more critically, how far one might go in questioning the very principle of political representation.

## **I Early French Socialism, the Jacobins, and the Principle of Political Representation before the Revolution of 1848**

Associated with the ‘black legend’ of Robespierre forged by the Thermidorians, popular sovereignty was conceptually reduced to the rank of a ‘juridical monster’ by Legitimists during the Bourbon Restoration, who linked it to regicide and the events of the Terror.<sup>9</sup> If for political reasons ultra-royalist discourse disqualified the legitimacy of popular sovereignty, liberals such as Benjamin Constant were no less condemnatory of the pernicious concept, which they perceived as a threat to the autonomy of individuals and the plurality of particular wills.<sup>10</sup> For their part, the *doctrinaires* associated with Guizot displaced the seat of sovereignty to a transcendent, impersonal reason, deduced exclusively

<sup>9</sup> On the ‘black legend’ of Robespierre, see J. Bureau, ‘Aux origines de la légende noire de Robespierre: les premiers récits sur l’événement-Thermidor’ in Wahnich (ed.), *Histoire d’un Trésor*, pp. 91–126.

<sup>10</sup> Besides the opening chapter of his *Principes de Politique*, see also B. Constant, *Positions de Combat à la Veille de Juillet 1830. Articles Publiés dans Le Temps, 1829–1830* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1989), pp. 101–2.

from the supposedly superior ratiocinating ‘capacities’ of French society’s most accomplished and wealthy property-owning members. If both liberals and *doctrinaires* excused certain moments of the French Revolution, they deplored others, in particular the Terror, for which they considered the sorts of perverse ideas that inspired the 1793 constitution to have been largely responsible.

In this context, the discourse of popular sovereignty did not initially dispose of any established partisan political forum for its expression. Insofar as it continued to live on in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was expressed almost inaudibly, at the unofficial margins of the legal world, taking subterranean form in funerals, songs, or other fringe expressions of popular protest and subaltern resistance in a time of censorship.<sup>11</sup> Those early social reformers associated with the founding fathers of ‘socialism’ (most notably Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, and Etienne Cabet) acknowledged the importance of the French Revolution but insisted that they did not want to re-enact it. They preferred the diffusion of a harmonious social model to the revolutionary violence of the past, and they reproached the government of 1793 for having been more ‘revolutionary’ than ‘republican’, while admitting, in the words of one historian of legal ideas, that ‘the constitution of Year I [1793] [...] was too democratic for its time’.<sup>12</sup>

Subsequent to the *Trois Glorieuses* of the Revolution of 1830, reference to the ideal of popular sovereignty became again both expressible and audible, much like reference to the constitution of Year I, which some sympathetic contemporaries were now at partisan pains to distinguish from the Terror.<sup>13</sup> In his *Histoire des Montagnards*, Alphonse Esquiros explained:

one claims that the Constitution of 1793 was inapplicable: it would be more accurate to say that it was never applied and to stop there . . . Because we were at war, and the war demanded exceptional measures; because we were in revolution and the constitutional act was written with a Republic grounded on a regular and stable foundation in mind. This is the reason for which . . . the legislators of 93 recognised the need to keep it under wraps until the peace.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See the overview by E. Fureix, ‘Une transmission discontinue. Présences sensibles de la Révolution Française, de la Restauration aux années 1830’ in Wahnich (ed.), *Histoire d’un trésor*, pp. 149–93.

<sup>12</sup> M. David, *La Souveraineté du Peuple* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), p. 208.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208–11.

<sup>14</sup> A. Esquiros, *Histoire des Montagnards* (Paris: Lecou, 1847), p. 431. This theory of extenuating circumstances thwarting the application of constitutional radicalism can be largely traced back to Robespierre’s attempts at self-justification in 1794. It has been

Some French socialists dreamed of re-enacting the revolution in the name of equality and fraternity rather than liberty. In their *Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française*,<sup>15</sup> Philippe Buchez and Pierre-Celestin Roux-Lavergne tried to show how the revolution was not an accident, but that it should be inscribed teleologically within the scope of a much larger history whose overarching orientation was Jacobin, and even more specifically *Montagnard* (although the ardently Catholic authors of the *Histoire Parlementaire* regretted that Robespierre never fully embraced the fundamentally Christian bedrock of his actions). Because, according to Buchez and Roux, the French Revolution had been illegitimately confiscated by the bourgeoisie, it had resulted in the break-up of society and its fragmentation into scattered individuals. From this class insight, they concluded that it was necessary to redo the French Revolution, but this time basing it on the principles of ‘association’, the conceptual cornerstone and ubiquitous keyword of early French socialist discourse.

If the results of the institutional changes wrought by the Revolution of 1830 seemed frustratingly insufficient for many, permissible public debate was nevertheless profoundly modified. With the widespread circulation of popular slogans like ‘the king will be the best of republics, a throne surrounded by republican institutions’, the new Orléanist regime initially appeared to have achieved some legitimacy in public opinion insofar as it incarnated the fiction of a contractual monarchy. The regime’s more radical opponents quickly decried the usurpation of popular sovereignty, wrought by the prolongation of the restricted franchise. In this context, one of the legacies of the French Revolution was to lend a dramatic, seemingly world-historical intensity to early nineteenth-century debates about what might be the best form of government possible in the light of the French people’s seeming inability, since 1789, to establish a stable political system. Although the French Revolution had first imposed the principle of representation upon national political life, it was not before the Bourbon Restoration and the July Monarchy that representative government ever really came to be thought of as a necessary constitutional guarantee for a liberal state.<sup>16</sup> Whereas

largely discredited by late twentieth-century historiography on the French Revolution done in the wake of François Furet’s work.

<sup>15</sup> P. J. B. Buchez and P. C. Roux, *Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française* (Paris: Paulin, 1834–1838).

<sup>16</sup> See F. Perrin, *L’intérêt Général et le Libéralisme Politique. Entre Droits et Intérêts Particuliers (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)* (Paris: LGDJ, 2013); F. Dupuis-Déri, *Démocratie: Histoire politique d’un mot. Aux États-Unis et en France* (Montréal: Lux, 2013); and S. Hayat, *Quand la République était Révolutionnaire. Citoyenneté et Représentation en 1848* (Paris: Seuil, 2014). For a definition of representative government, see B. Manin, *Principes du Gouvernement Représentatif* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996).



partisans of the July Monarchy claimed the regime was sufficiently representative, socialist and republican opponents did not hesitate to denounce the corruption of its deputies, the restricted suffrage which gave them factitious legitimacy as representatives, and the lack of real representation in the Chamber of Deputies. Many critics pointed to the aristocratic and elitist character of electoral representation based on payment of taxes linked to property ownership, a criterion for political participation which struck them as contrary to the necessary level of equality intrinsic to genuine democracy. To obviate the authoritarian excesses of the 'government of men', early French socialists extrapolated the Saint-Simonian ideal of creating an 'administration of things', which could preserve people's freedom. Best-selling author Louis Blanc was highly critical of the political liberalism of Benjamin Constant, whom he accused of believing that individual interests have nothing to do with the general interest (whereas, on the contrary, according to Blanc, every particular interest was necessarily closely 'related to the satisfaction of the general interest').<sup>17</sup>

Encouraged by the intransigence of Guizot's ministry, the 1847 banquet campaign for electoral reform progressively turned into a much more radical campaign for universal suffrage in the weeks leading up to the 1848 Revolution as members of the opposition voiced the idea that social inequality might be resolved through the direct election of representatives themselves coming from the lower classes. Many of the orators at the 1847–48 banquets established a direct link between electoral and social reform, already made during the first unsuccessful campaign for electoral reform in 1838–41. François Arago, for example, had forcefully argued in his famous 16 May 1840 speech at the Chamber of Deputies that the *doctrinaire* model of the 'sovereignty of reason' needed to be called into question because of the significant overlap between alarming levels of working-class poverty and restricted political representation.<sup>18</sup> During the closing months of 1847, the framework of debate had not changed much from the earlier campaign for electoral reform and still revolved around how best to determine the proper criterion for 'capacity' requisite for political representation which might facilitate the eventual enfranchisement of the propertiless classes.

<sup>17</sup> These criticisms were made in a series of articles from 1841 entitled 'La Commune' published in *Le Bon Sens* and republished in Blanc, *Questions d'aujourd'hui et de demain*, 5 vols. (Paris: Dentu, 1873), vol. I, pp. 307–8.

<sup>18</sup> For Arago's speech, see its reproduction in *Le Moniteur universel*, 138, 17 May 1840, pp. 1079–81, and Hayat's recent discussion in *Quand la République était Révolutionnaire*, pp. 59–61.



Partly for these reasons, the 1847–48 campaign for electoral reform did not automatically garner the support of all French socialists. Some writers even conspiratorially denounced the discursive confusion of ‘the people’ with the cause of political representation made by proponents of electoral reform who ultimately, they claimed, only wanted to get themselves elected to public office. For example, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon exclaimed in his notebooks after the first banquet: ‘Political reform will be the effect, not the means of social reform . . . Is the abolition of poverty a legislative problem, or an economic problem?’<sup>19</sup> While the banquets gradually turned into a campaign for universal suffrage, Proudhon’s criticisms remained focused on the larger issue of representation:

[I]f I attack electoral reform, why not attack the representative system? We should request the end of legislative debates as they are customarily conducted; we should render the Tribune mute . . . Nothing has been done in France with a Republic. Many things [were] begun, none finished.<sup>20</sup>

Admittedly, previous experiences of republican government in France were not very reassuring.

## II The Socialist Debate about Democracy during the Second Republic

If the chaotic events of the first months of the Revolution of 1848 seemed to confirm Proudhon’s misgivings about universal suffrage and the illusions of political representation, the short history of the Second Republic would prove that his fears about the abuses inherent to political representation were more than grounded. This was particularly in evidence after the electoral law of 31 May 1850 restricting suffrage. The passage of this law sparked a debate about ‘direct democracy’ among French socialists and marked a turning point in radical thought in political representation. Whereas radical republicans and socialists had previously worked within the referential framework of the legacy of the unfulfilled promise of popular sovereignty contained within the *Montagnard* constitution, after the 1850 law they were compelled to re-examine many of their assumptions about the feasibility of putting democracy into practice in any fashion.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Proudhon, *Carnets* (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2005), p. 564. On Proudhon’s intellectual evolution between 1847 and 1848, see E. Castleton, ‘The many revolutions of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’, [Chapter 2](#) of this volume.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 710.

<sup>21</sup> See my article, ‘Face à la trahison des représentants: Proudhon et l’opposition socialiste à la loi du 31 mai 1850’ in *Revue Française d’histoire des Idées Politiques*, 31 (2010), 81–107.

The February Revolution had taken everyone by surprise when it replaced a monarchical government with a republican one. To give legitimacy to the new regime, the provisional government proclaimed universal manhood suffrage on 5 March, and announced the election of a Constituent Assembly. If the precocity of this proclamation was an obvious victory for republicans and socialists alike, the short time before elections to the Constituent Assembly worked against them politically, preventing them from waging a successful campaign and winning over voters who had never voted before and who had never been seriously exposed to their ideas. In his first work published after the February Revolution, Proudhon refused to yield to the enthusiasm of the republican camp, and he questioned the legitimacy of the republican conception of representation based on universal suffrage:

[H]ow does the election of citizens, even by unanimous vote, possess the virtue requisite to confer this sort of privilege and serve as interpreter to the People? And when you show me on the Chamber floor nine hundred people chosen by their fellow citizens, why should I believe that these nine hundred delegates, who do not even get along with one another, are the word of the people from which they emanate? For that matter, how is it that the laws they pass force me to obey them?<sup>22</sup>

Among the leading French socialists of the time, these doubts were a minority view, however. A much more favourable and pragmatic justification of political representation based on universal suffrage was generally voiced. Blanc, for his part, would retrospectively justify his support for universal suffrage and the forms of representative delegation it entailed by linking the ‘legislative function’ (as opposed to the ‘legislative power’) of a genuine republic with the division of labour. According to him, because some members of society were naturally more willing than others to get involved in politics, universal suffrage should grant them, in accordance with the distributive principle of each according to his faculties, the ‘legislative function’ of a republican government.<sup>23</sup>

After the disappointing legislative elections of April, the first based on universal suffrage, the disastrous failure of the 15 May demonstration, and the bloody repression of June, it became clear that the majority of French people were both hostile to socialism and far removed in their ideological orientation from the sorts of issues debated in Paris. For most newly enfranchised electors, particularly those outside major urban areas, the elected Assembly was the legitimate embodiment of the law under the new republic. For them, to criticise representation based on universal manhood suffrage was the equivalent of pretending to be above the law.

<sup>22</sup> Proudhon, *Solution du Problème Social* (Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 2003 [1848]), p. 56.

<sup>23</sup> Blanc, ‘Du gouvernement du peuple par lui-même’, *Questions*, vol. I, p. 79.

The successive conservative parliamentary majorities, elected in 1848 to the Constituent Assembly and in 1849 to the Legislative Assembly, seized upon this widely held prejudice, claiming that their electoral victories were a popular ratification of their traditional political domination. The legitimacy of those ballots cast in their favour was called into question by the left-wing opposition upset with the electoral results, but for the vast majority of French voters, protest against the expression of universal manhood suffrage was taken to be illegal and a dangerous subversion to be quashed, as the Parisian workers discovered at great cost in June 1848.

If popular support for the repression of the June Days inspired some prominent members of the left to reconsider the representative principle, this reconsideration was considerably exacerbated two years later in 1850. Frightened by the *démoc-soc* electoral successes of the March and April 1850 elections, fearful of possible electoral defeat in 1852, and intent on consolidating their control of the legislature, conservative representatives decided to pass a measure preventing much of the left's electoral base from voting. Claiming to want to save French society from a supposedly imminent socialist political takeover, they chose to re-examine in the Legislative Assembly those voting rights officially consecrated on the basis of universal manhood suffrage. The resulting 31 May 1850 law increased the number of individuals deemed 'incapable' of voting by raising the residency requirement (from six months to three years) and demanding, for proof of residency, payment of direct taxes (echoing, in the process, the restricted franchise of the July Monarchy). With such caveats, the law succeeded in excluding more than 3 million citizens from voting.<sup>24</sup> Politically impotent, the republican and socialist left reacted to this restrictive legislative measure with a proliferation of publications about the nature of popular sovereignty. In the ensuing profusion of critical ideas, a certain number of themes initially stood out: most notably the disparity between the really existing 'people' made sovereign through republican government and its highly circumscribed legal definition; the hijacking of popular sovereignty through political representation; and, in the words of Victor Considerant, the refusal of the reigning elites to recognise the aptitude of the French people 'to govern themselves'.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> On this law, besides my aforementioned article, 'Face à la trahison des représentants', see H. Laferrière, *La loi électorale du 31 mai 1850* (Paris: Giard et Brière, 1910), and P. Raphaël, 'La loi du 31 mai 1850' in *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 1 (1910), 277–91.

<sup>25</sup> Considerant, *La Solution, ou le Gouvernement direct du Peuple* (Paris: Librairie Phalanstérienne, 1850), p.1.

Some scholars have recently argued that the main actors of the 1848 Revolution had great difficulty finding the right language to use for making demands on behalf of the people, operating as they did within the gulf between the language of representation and the elusiveness of what exactly was to be represented. But by focusing on the admittedly creative discursive ways in which different contemporaries claimed to speak and act on behalf of the French people during the months immediately following February 1848, such scholars perhaps obfuscate the concrete constitutional dimension to representation at work throughout the short but tumultuous lifespan of the Second Republic. It might have been the case that before the first elected assembly claimed to have a monopoly on representation, the Provisional Government, the National Guard, the Luxembourg Commission, and the numerous political clubs could be thought to be so many instances of popular representation.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, any attempt to underscore the importance of democratic conceptions of representing popular sovereignty during the Second Republic outside of mere political elections needs to acknowledge that in official legal terms obvious to all contemporaries, it was the elected legislative assembly which was the most important vehicle for the representation of popular sovereignty. The repressive legislative act of 31 May 1850 was evidence enough of this fact. The exclusion of almost 3 million voters forced the left-leaning political opposition to address the issue of the betrayal of the people by their representatives. Not only did the successful passage of this law oblige many radical republicans and socialists to consider how best to respond to such a regressive measure in the light of the reactionary political climate, it inspired many to assert that the likelihood of the confiscation of popular sovereignty might be intrinsic to the very principle of delegation. Following the passage of the 1850 law, numerous leading socialist and republicans became quickly critical of the principle of political representation itself, since it seemed to confirm that the French people, made sovereign in February 1848, were thereafter less represented than ruled by their elected officials. Thus, according to some socialist luminaries, the dysfunctionality of universal manhood suffrage was not due to some fundamental flaw in its principle (there was nothing wrong with voting) but to the representative system that perverted it (there was something universally wrong with the individuals the sovereign people elected). In this manner, incapable of politically overturning the restrictions on suffrage, many socialists now marginalised through either

<sup>26</sup> See Hayat, *Quand la République était Révolutionnaire*; also 'Participation, discussion et représentation: l'expérience clubiste de 1848', *Participations*, 3 (2012/2), 119–40, and 'Working-Class Socialism in 1848 in France', [Chapter 5](#) of this volume.

exile or imprisonment sought to redefine the locus and mode of suffrage within a system of more direct democracy characterised by either 'direct legislation' or the imposition of imperative mandates such that the perversities of representation could be attenuated as much as possible, if not eliminated altogether.

Since popular sovereignty could not be expressed – or at least could not solely be expressed – by an elected legislative assembly, one witnessed a resurgence in far-left circles (particularly those close to the Fourierist movement) of the idea of 'direct government' based on a certain radical republican reading of Rousseau's *Contrat Social* fashionable ever since the French Revolution.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, if consent to the law had become the guarantee of political freedom post-1789, then that consent had to be made 'direct' so as to rein in potentially deviant elected officials. Former deputy and Fourierist leader Considerant explained that delegation was 'a perpetual dupery of political democracy', since through the electoral process it empowers an official class of representatives who thereafter seek only to remain in office at all costs at the expense of the supposed sovereignty of their electors.<sup>28</sup> Genuine democrats, he argued, should be thankful since the 31 May law proved beyond any doubt that 'when we delegated sovereignty to representatives, we became nothing more than the very humble subjects of said representatives'.<sup>29</sup> In making these criticisms, Considerant was building upon the ideas of the exiled German republican and Fourierist fellow traveller, Moritz Rittinghausen, who denounced not only the practice but the principle of representation itself, at once a vestige of Europe's feudal past and the pure fiction of a 'representative mandate', which did nothing to bind delegates to their constituents during the duration of their mandates. Rittinghausen claimed that 'it is absurd to want to have something represented by something which is absolutely the opposite of it: *the black by the white, the general interest of a people by a particular interest* which is its opposite'.<sup>30</sup> In the current system of national representation, 'the delegate only represents *himself*, since he votes according to his own will and not according to his electors. He can say *yes* when the latter say *no*, and he will say it in most cases'.<sup>31</sup> The 31 May 1850 law was proof of this assertion since it signified the 'abolition of the right of suffrage of

<sup>27</sup> On this subject, besides my 'Face à la trahison des représentants', see also M. David, 'Le Gouvernement direct du peuple selon les proscrits de la Seconde République', in *Association française des historiens des idées politiques* (ed.), *La Pensée démocratique* (Aix en Provence: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 1996), pp. 153–65.

<sup>28</sup> Considerant, *La Solution*, p. 11. <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> M. Rittinghausen, *La Législation Directe par le Peuple ou la Véritable Démocratie* (Paris, Librairie Phalanstérienne, 1850), p. 12, emphasis in the original.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

3 million Frenchmen through a strike made on the authority of those whose very legislative power came from these [same] votes'.<sup>32</sup> Rittinghausen, like Considerant after him, wanted to bypass any form of political delegation and avoid the problems associated with the supposed alienation of sovereignty through representation by linking the legislative function directly to democratic discussion and referendum on the local level, ascending upwards to a national level. In many ways, both did no more than elaborate upon the Rousseauist insight that popular sovereignty cannot not alienated, for the same reason it cannot be represented, since one can only obey laws to which one has consented.<sup>33</sup>

Other contemporaries, like Alexandre Ledru-Rollin, former leader of the *Montagne* in the Legislative Assembly before his flight into exile after the 13 June 1849 demonstration, contested less the principle of political representation and the delegation of legislative authority than its reality as embodied in the actual composition of the legislative branch of the new republic.<sup>34</sup> Ledru-Rollin endorsed a more watered-down version of the constitution of 1793, in which it was less important if popular sovereignty was effectively enacted in 'direct legislation' than it was to see it 'always constituted, always present, never abdicating' through political representation.<sup>35</sup> His solution to overriding the deadlock between the executive and legislative branches in which the Second Republic became mired during its short existence was at once to abolish the direct election of the president by universal suffrage (Ledru-Rollin was far from alone in advocating this), and to promote the principle of least representation according to which 'the people should do by themselves everything that they can reasonably do', leaving only the rest to their representatives.<sup>36</sup> To facilitate this political makeover, Ledru-Rollin sought to rehabilitate the Rousseauist idea – fiercely debated during the French Revolution, particularly during the constitutional debates of 1793 – of mandated delegates linking representatives more directly to their electors through their own revocability. He was convinced that the imposition of 'imperative' representative mandates would make deputies 'mere delegates,

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> 'Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason it cannot be alienated; it consists essentially in the general will, and the will does not admit of being represented ... The deputies of the people therefore are not and cannot be its representatives, they are merely its agents; they cannot conclude anything definitively.' Rousseau, *Social Contract*, p. 114

<sup>34</sup> Ledru-Rollin expressed many of these ideas in his article, 'Plus de Président, plus de représentants', published in the exile periodical, *La Voix du proscrit* (October 1851) and republished in volume 2 of his *Discours Politiques et Écrits divers* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1879), pp. 421–30.

<sup>35</sup> Ledru-Rollin, *Discours Politiques*, vol. 2, p. 429. <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

agents, that is to say employees named only to prepare the law'.<sup>37</sup> Writing from exile in London, Ledru-Rollin fancied himself a sort of heir apparent in a distinguished revolutionary genealogy running from Marie-Jean Hérault de Seychelles and Robespierre back to Rousseau, who, after all, had himself even defined the British representative system as being an extended and fully deserved servitude punctuated by 'brief moments' of 'freedom' experienced during parliamentary elections.<sup>38</sup> For Ledru-Rollin, recourse to a popular vote should only occur with regard to the endorsement of general principles, the revocable representatives themselves being left to determine the particular details inherent to the exact application of approved legislation. To this extent, he did not differ much from Considerant, who also drew a Rousseauist distinction between abstract laws and concrete decrees, in which (unlike the more radical Rittinghausen) the programme of 'direct legislation' only applied to the former.<sup>39</sup> For that matter, such Rousseauist criticism of the freedom to give oneself a master through political representation was fairly commonplace outside of socialist circles. Echoing Rousseau's criticisms of political delegation, republican philosopher Charles Renouvier likewise denounced the principle of delegating legislative sovereignty, which for him was the equivalent of 'giving oneself masters or assisting usurpers'.<sup>40</sup>

Proudhon had already intuited the same problem in his much earlier 1848 pamphlet, noting how democracy could only plausibly be said to exist at the moment of elections when legislative power was constituted. Once this moment had passed, democracy turned into something bordering on its antithesis, 'authority'. The result was that deputies initially

elected . . . to represent France, do not represent anything; they are not representatives, but senators, and instead of a representative democracy, we have an elective oligarchy, the middle term between democracy and monarchy.<sup>41</sup>

Two years later, he anticipated the backlash of conservatives to the election results of March and April 1850 and launched a campaign for safeguarding universal suffrage in his latest newspaper, *La Voix du Peuple*. In an editorial published on 4 May 1850 only weeks before the fatal vote

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 421. <sup>38</sup> Rousseau, *Social Contract*, p. 114.

<sup>39</sup> More radical than Considerant, Rittinghausen wanted popular participation in every step of the formulation of laws: in their initiative, drafting, and ratification. Considerant wanted popular local referendums only to apply to general principles, and not to the applicable specificities contained within any resultant decrees.

<sup>40</sup> Bellouard [et al.], *Gouvernement direct. Organisation Communale et Centrale de la République* (Paris: Librairie Républicaine de la Liberté de la Pensée, 1851). On Renouvier, see G. Thuillier, 'La Gouvernement Direct de Charles Renouvier' in *Revue Administrative*, 117 (Mai-Juin 1967), 262–68, and M.-C. Blais, *Au Principe de la République: Le Cas Renouvier* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Proudhon, *Solution du Problème Social*, p. 65.



restricting suffrage, Proudhon's paper recalled the inalienable and imprescriptible character of popular sovereignty (enshrined in Article 1 of the 1848 Constitution) of which the people themselves, much less their representatives, could not deprive themselves. Warning deputies of the full significance of their vote, *La Voix* warned that to 'delete a citizen's right of suffrage means to restore his right to insurrection' due to the violation of constitution.<sup>42</sup> In a speech given on 21 May 1850, Victor Hugo would employ much the same line of argument, speaking of the outrage committed against popular sovereignty by the restriction of suffrage, which would leave the people no other right but that of revolt and insurrection.<sup>43</sup> However, since the repression of June 1848 had flagrantly revealed the willingness of conservative political forces to suppress popular uprisings, arguments in favour of recourse to insurrection were quickly abandoned in 1850 out of fear of the reprisals they would incur. Even Proudhon, in his 1849 *Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire*, had commended the wisdom of the French people, who understood 'that it was better for the defence of the people's rights to let state power lose its legitimacy through its policies, rather than providing it with an opportunity for slaughter, and perhaps victory'.<sup>44</sup>

Once the 31 May 1850 had passed, Proudhon stood aloof from his fellow socialists as a sceptical observer of their attempts to transform criticisms of delegation and representation into advocacy of concrete reform measures for creating reinvigorated legislative democracy. Sympathetic to the idea of 'imperative mandates', Proudhon was not opposed in principle to direct government either, although he was deeply sceptical of the different ways fellow socialists and radicals suggested one might realise it constitutionally. He therefore warned their advocates: 'you must be blind not to see that the sovereign people, if they are to govern by voting, will discuss as much as its representatives, that if the people discusses, they will commit many mistakes, and if they do not discuss, they will respond in any which way'.<sup>45</sup> Proudhon feared the dissolution of the general interest of French society within the sum of individual interests

<sup>42</sup> 'Avertissement', *La Voix du Peuple*, 4 May 1850.

<sup>43</sup> See *Discours de Victor Hugo dans la Discussion du Projet de Loi Electorale* (Paris: Bureau de L'Événement [1850]). As early as 1848, Charles Renouvier already speculated about the recourse to insurrection within the institutional framework of a republican regime whose laws imposed unfair measures adversely affecting majorities. But he concluded that insurrection would only be legitimate if all avenues of appeal had been exhausted and if 'a large number of enlightened citizens' acquiesced to revolt. See Renouvier, *Manuel Républicain de l'Homme et du Citoyen* (Paris: Au Comptoir des Imprimeurs Unis, 1848).

<sup>44</sup> Proudhon, *Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire* (Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 1997 [1849]), p. 248.

<sup>45</sup> Proudhon, *Carnets*, p. 1280



composing it, as well as the indefinite duration of political debates direct democracy would encourage, since such debates would only increase in proportion to the number of legislators. He was also critical of how one might practically organise referendums in keeping with the notion of direct democracy such as Rittinghausen and Considerant advocated.<sup>46</sup> Rittinghausen invoked the necessity for drafting clear and unambiguous legislation ‘which would have the advantage of not admitting several interpretations’ while emanating from public discussions ‘in an organic way’. Sceptical, Proudhon took up his earlier criticisms of the atomising effects of democracy and again warned that majority rule would still foster the fragmentation of opinions rather than their unification, particularly given (as he had already noted in 1847) that ‘the majority, like a prostitute, gives itself to everyone’.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, for Proudhon, ‘direct government’ and ‘direct legislation’ were ‘the two greatest blunders one has talked about in the annals of politics and philosophy’.<sup>48</sup>

Nor was he alone. Despite the setback of 31 May 1850, Louis Blanc remained in favour of representation, but strictly controlled, directly elected, and within a constitutional framework in which representatives would be like messengers bound to their electors by annual imperative mandates:

[N]o more personal inviolability: the inviolable are sooner or later tyrants! No functions which can be abused without danger . . . If elected for only a year or two, [representatives] were fired upon the expiration of their term for being unfaithful employees, if the shame of the revolution could be inflicted upon them . . . would they have mutilated universal suffrage?<sup>49</sup>

At the same time, Louis Blanc was absolutely opposed to the direct government of people, which he thought to be a deviation from universal suffrage. He even devoted a series of articles to the question in which he insisted upon what he took to be the originality of his position compared with those of other rival socialists. Blanc warned his readers:

<sup>46</sup> Proudhon attacked at length Considerant, Rittinghausen, Ledru-Rollin, and Blanc (as well as Rousseau, Robespierre, and the Constitution of 1793) in the fourth study of his *Idée Générale de la Révolution au XIXe Siècle* (Antony: Tops-Trinquier, [1851]), notably pp. 121–87.

<sup>47</sup> Proudhon, *Carnets*, p. 693.

<sup>48</sup> Proudhon, *Idée Générale*, p. 124. On Proudhon’s evolving appreciation of democracy within the context of the formulation of these criticisms, see [Castleton](#) in this volume.

<sup>49</sup> Blanc, ‘Du gouvernement du peuple par lui-même’, originally published in 1850 and republished in Blanc, *Questions*, vol. 1, pp. 127–28. On Blanc’s attitude towards political representation and popular sovereignty, see M. David, ‘Louis Blanc, la République et la souveraineté réelle du peuple’ in F. Démier (ed.), *Louis Blanc, un Socialiste en République* (Paris: Créaphis, 2006), pp. 93–105.

Ah, you are attached to universal suffrage? Well! Do not exaggerate it, do not compromise it, do not recklessly arm it against itself, do not promote, at the risk of a fatal repentance, the growth of ideas which, like those of Messieurs Considerant and Rittinghausen, will bury it under the impossible.<sup>50</sup>

Blanc admitted that the republic was poorly organised in 1848, but this was because 'the real rules of democracy have never been followed'. Unfortunately, the recent rehabilitation of the idea of 'direct government' was a reflection of the fascination of contemporary socialists with a completely idealised and anachronistic dogma. Whether drawn from classical antiquity and its slaveholding city-states, Rousseau's elevation of Geneva as a republican model, or an attempts to apply Rousseauist ideas in the constitution of 1793, 'direct government', even in principle Blanc insisted, was impossible to imagine since 'it is not being governed to govern oneself', a point indeed as old as Jean Bodin's criticisms of democracy in the sixteenth century. If they were often adversaries, Blanc and Proudhon both basically concurred that in the theories of 'direct government' being bandied about, nothing proved the qualitative infallibility of the quantitative majority. Founded on the principle of the direct participation of a sovereign people in the generation of laws, such theories were nothing more than a presumption likely, in the grandiloquent words of Blanc, to translate in practice into 'the pressure of the ignorant upon the educated, of bitter egotists upon the generous, of the henchmen or victims of lies upon the rare zealots of truth, of the innumerable army of routine upon the sacred battalion of progress'.<sup>51</sup> Like Proudhon, Blanc found that the majoritarian implications of the 'direct government of the people' signified the government of the smallest number by the largest, such that only the majority could be properly considered to constitute 'the people', the minority being 'something other than the people'.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly appeals to 'direct government' (and the eradication of all forms of legislative delegation) were not to all French socialists' taste. Nor was the immediate political context of 1850–51 auspicious for ideological consensus either. If the left had more or less successfully formed an oppositional coalition against the conservatives in the Assembly between 1849 and 1850, the electoral law of 31 May 1850 caused new fractures and awakened old grudges (such as those between Blanc and Proudhon). Taking advantage of such divisions, which rendered largely inaudible the socialist opposition (itself constantly threatened since June 1848 by

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 180–82.

<sup>51</sup> Blanc, 'Du gouvernement direct du peuple par lui-même', *Questions*, vol. I, p. 118.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

the prospect of a repression supported by the majority of the people), Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte focused his political machinations on demonising the conservative Legislative Assembly, which had been largely discredited by the restrictive electoral law it had passed, while he reassuringly promised to maintain law and order against the forces of left-wing sedition. In the spring of 1851, the president directly appealed to the masses of French voters to accept a compromise solution combining the revision of the constitution (allowing for Louis-Napoléon to be re-elected to a second presidential term) with the abolition of the unpopular 31 May 1850 law. On the basis of the democratic promise of the restoration of universal suffrage, Bonaparte thought he could plausibly justify a coup d'état in the face of resistance from the conservative legislature, and he admitted as much in his 31 December 1851 quip after a national plebiscite ratified his coup (7,439,216 to 640,737): 'France . . . has understood that I only departed from legality to promote the law'.<sup>53</sup> Socialists were left watching the whole process impotently uncertain whom they should condemn first, whether it be the new imperial Bonapartist regime, the conservative legislature which unintentionally brought it to power through poor political calculus, the ineffectual left-wing opposition which failed to prevent its triumph, or the electoral masses which enthusiastically embraced Caesarism. In the face of widespread popular support for such adverse developments, Proudhon's original problem with how one could properly 'question the people', first expressed in print in early 1848, seemed more acute than ever once French political life had been democratised through the expansion of manhood suffrage.<sup>54</sup>

### III The Diminishing Returns of Direct Democracy during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

The various projects for 'direct government' put forth during the final years of the Second Republic were based on the idea of a virtuous, politically active, and informed 'people'. Indeed, in the light of the multitude of working-class associations, newspapers, and political clubs of the 1848–51 era, 'the people' often appeared much more mature during the Second Republic than the speeches of their official representatives might lead one to believe. One could justifiably argue that there was, in fact, a vibrant working-class culture genuinely interested in political life during this period, one indicative of a 'people' which – far from being a mere abstraction, wanted the reality of its composite socioeconomic

<sup>53</sup> É. Anceau, *Napoléon III, un Saint-Simon à Cheval* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008), p. 194.

<sup>54</sup> Proudhon, *Solution*, p. 39.

complexity to be recognised.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, socialists throughout Europe were deeply troubled by the apparent apathy of the very same sovereign people they had once championed in the wake of the 1851 coup d'état. Subsequent to popular support for the bloody repression of the June Days, the overwhelming presidential victory of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in 1848, and the disastrous 13 June 1849 demonstration, Marx and Engels, for example, began their attempts to theorise the nefariously equivocal world-historical role played by a 'Lumpenproletariat', without proper class consciousness, in a series of articles published in 1849 and 1850 on the campaign for the German imperial constitution, the class struggles in France, and the 1525 Peasant War in Germany.<sup>56</sup> In a subsequent series of articles about French politics during the Second Republic published in 1852, Marx would famously both revise and amplify this analysis in order retrospectively to explain the events leading up to Bonaparte's coup d'état.<sup>57</sup> Such writings, largely inspired by political impotence and marginality, were characteristic of a larger crisis of left-wing thought provoked by the apparent failure of France's most recent bold experiment in popular sovereignty. This failure seemed to call into question the same 'people' which European radicals had sought to make sovereign ever since the French Revolution.

Alexis de Tocqueville was certainly not alone when he wrote contemptuously of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's peculiar combination of 'a sort of abstract adoration of the people' with his 'little taste of liberty' and his 'hate and contempt for assemblies'.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, with hindsight, one is compelled to admit that it was Bonaparte who, more politically astute than his contemporaries, understood long before the socialists and the republicans of the Second Republic that 'the people' were different from the urban working-class population socialists and republicans chiefly sought to empower. To this extent, both republicans and socialists were blinded by the same sociological myopia as the Jacobins before them in only seeking to appeal to the urban artisanal classes. Unfortunately for them, universal manhood suffrage gave the most electoral weight in 1848

<sup>55</sup> An assessment attested by many contemporary autobiographical accounts of the events of 1848. See Louis Ménard, *Prologue d'une Révolution, Février-Juin 1848* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2007 [1849]).

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, in *Marx Engels Collected Works* (henceforth *MECW*), 50 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1976), vol. X, pp. 51, 62, 165, 168, 317 and 407–8. Previously, the term had been used by the duo to describe the relative poverty of Stirner's sociological imaginary in *The German Ideology*.

<sup>57</sup> For the relevant passages in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, see *MECW*, vol. XI, pp. 110, 143, 149, 155, 182, and 193–95.

<sup>58</sup> Tocqueville, *Recollections: The French Revolution of 1848* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1987 [1893]), p. 204.

to those who lived in the countryside, and left-leaning contemporaries were compelled to recognise that the rural classes were not especially attached to the cause of the new republic, contrary to the presuppositions of the various theories of direct democracy in circulation. Up until 1848, the hypothesis that the will of 'the people' would spontaneously endorse the republic-nourished faith in universal suffrage. After the collapse of the Second Republic, the popular success of the coup d'état, and the relatively fluid institutional transformation of France into a second Bonapartist empire, socialists were confronted with an invidious choice about how to interpret the recent course of events: either they could opt for maintaining their faith in the infallibility of 'the people' (in which case they had to recognise the legitimacy of the imperial regime), or they could condemn the Caesarism of Napoleon III (and thereby admit to the fallibility of 'the people'). If the concept of a 'Lumpenproletariat', for instance, could be mobilised by writers like Marx in order to denounce the free votes of an undesirable (because apolitical and ignorant) segment of the working class unable to recognise its genuine class interests, it also could be used to call into question left-wing advocacy of 'direct government', which practically ceased during the Second Empire. In Francophone socialist circles, one of the last vestiges of the 1850–51 debate can be found roughly ten years later in the writings of the eccentric Joseph Déjacque, the marginal exile and self-proclaimed '*libertaire*'. Déjacque wrote a series of articles in an obscure self-published journal printed in New York and New Orleans between 1858 and 1861 advocating a radical transformation of current political arrangements through a combination of 'purely imperative and exclusive administrative mandates' with 'direct and universal legislation'.<sup>59</sup> Although his arguments obviously echoed those of the earlier 1850 debate, combining virtually all the ideas in circulation from that debate, they were not, however, a reflection of mainstream socialist opinion which had long since moved on.

By the early 1860s, measures for reforming the democratic process were largely eclipsed on the far left by the endorsement of properly working-class candidacies for the imperial Legislative Body. In reaction to the 17 February 1864 Manifesto of the Sixty, advocating self-consciously

<sup>59</sup> On Déjacque, see Thomas Bouchet's edition of Déjacque's selected writings, *A bas les chefs ! Écrits libertaires (1847–1863)* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2016), and my article, 'Une voix étrange et dissonante de la démocratie radicale. Joseph Déjacque et la démocratie directe' in T. Bouchet and P. Samzun (eds.), *Libertaire ! Joseph Déjacque (1821–1865)* (Besançon, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et de l'Environnement, forthcoming). It is often claimed that Déjacque invented the neologism '*libertaire*', which, in French, remains synonymous to this day with '*anarchiste*', and likewise was in English (as '*libertarian*') until the First World War, whereupon it began to lose its left-wing connotation.

working-class participation in the political process, Proudhon, intransigent in his refusal to grant any political legitimacy to the imperial regime, sought to transform abstention from legislative elections in the form of blank ballots into a virtuous expression of working-class autonomy and separatism. Written on Proudhon's deathbed and his first posthumous work, *De la Capacité Politique des Classes Ouvrières* had much greater appeal subsequent to the innumerable political deceptions of the Third Republic than in the waning years of the Second Empire, and it would become the canonical breviary of revolutionary syndicalism at the turn of the century (and this, despite Proudhon's hostility to strikes in *De la Capacité*). Different from the less-jaded era of the mid-century, when universal manhood suffrage was not the constitutional norm, the receptive climate of the fin-de-siècle to arguments for abstention and working-class separatism was itself (and ironically, given Proudhon's anti-imperial intentions) the product of a more general disillusionment with democratic politics within a republican constitutional framework.

Practically alone against all, Moritz Rittinghausen pursued his crusade in favour of direct democracy. In a series of articles sent to various radical Belgian newspapers during the 1860s, he continued to argue that 'direct legislation' by 'the people' was the surest way to arrive at a radical reorganisation of democracy.<sup>60</sup> The indefatigable Rittinghausen worked tirelessly until his death in 1890 to see his ideas about 'direct legislation' applied in Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland (notably in the canton of Zurich).<sup>61</sup> Although he reiterated essentially the same arguments he had already put forth in 1850, he now could caution Europeans against the dangers of representation using recent French history to make his point.<sup>62</sup> Only now, socialists were less willing to listen. When Rittinghausen, as a member of the International Working Man's Association, attempted (with the backing of the Zurich section and Wilhelm Liebknecht) to have the IWMA debate the idea of 'direct legislation' at an 1869 conference in Basel, he was confronted with the overwhelming hostility of the majority of IWMA sections to the purely political nature of his electoral reform project. Bakunin's closest Swiss ally, James Guillaume, considered Rittinghausen's 'direct legislation' to be no more than a soporific attempt

<sup>60</sup> Notably in the Brussels-based *Le Proletaire* (between 1855 and 1856) and *La Liberté* (between 12 April 1868 and 9 May 1869). The articles from *Le Proletaire* were republished as 'Lettres sur la législation directe' in *La Revue socialiste*, 23 (1896), 326–44.

<sup>61</sup> On the reception of Rittinghausen's ideas in Europe, and particularly in Switzerland, see Marc Vuilleumier's 1996 essay, 'Le courant socialiste au XIXe siècle et ses idées sur la démocratie directe', republished in his collection of essays, *Histoires et Combats: Mouvement Ouvrier et Socialisme en Suisse, 1864–1960* (Lausanne: Éditions d'en bas, 2012), pp. 321–46.

<sup>62</sup> Notably in *La Liberté*, 9 May 1869.

‘to put the proletariat to sleep in order to distract it from revolutionary action’.<sup>63</sup> Rittinghausen vainly attempted to justify the relevance of his ideas to the IWMA by arguing that one could not discuss social reforms without imagining a means to their execution since otherwise ‘the revolution will die miserably like in 1848’.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, despite his insistence about the pertinence of his ideas to the larger socialist cause, the IWMA officially affirmed its desire ‘not to participate in any political movement that did not have for its immediate aim the emancipation of workers’, and, in the end, Rittinghausen’s proposal was never debated.<sup>65</sup> A year later, Bakunin claimed that ‘direct legislation’ as it had been recently applied in the canton of Zurich in the form of referendum initiatives would only perpetuate a governmental regime, whereas the IWMA should aim to destroy all forms of government, no matter what they were.<sup>66</sup> Rittinghausen’s legislative project would later be combated with equal vigour by Karl Kautsky for its overly Swiss character, politically inappropriate for Central European societies and incapable of offering any real solution to the class struggle which characterised modern capitalism.<sup>67</sup> Thus, between the late 1860s and the early 1890s, a certain left-wing critical consensus negatively evaluating direct democracy had formed throughout Europe, ranging the ideological gamut from anarchism to social democracy.<sup>68</sup>

In France, direct democracy fared no better. In 1871, the Paris Commune attempted to make citizens more than mere electors by associating them directly with the preparation and execution of legislative

<sup>63</sup> *Le Progrès* [Le Locle], 18 September 1869.

<sup>64</sup> J. Freymond (ed.), *La Première Internationale*, vol. II (Geneva: Droz, 1962), p. 17.

<sup>65</sup> On the contemporary reactions of different members of the IWMA to Rittinghausen’s proposal at the IWMA Congress, see Guillaume, *L’Internationale, Documents et Souvenirs*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Grounauer, 1980), vol. I, pp. 190–91 and 195–96.

<sup>66</sup> Bakunin made many of these criticisms of the illusory federalism of the Swiss political model in the context of an attack on the Swiss government’s decision to extradite Sergey Nechayev, the subject of his 1870 pamphlet, *Les Ours de Berne et l’Ours de Saint-Petersbourg*, republished in A. Lehning (ed.), *Michel Bakounine et ses Relations avec Serge Netchaïev* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), notably pp. 64–65. On the larger impact the European revolutions of 1848 had on Bakunin’s arrival at this radically anti-statist conclusion, see J.-C. Angaut, ‘Revolution and the Slav question: 1848 and Michael Bakunin’, Chapter 17 of this volume.

<sup>67</sup> Rittinghausen’s direct legislation project, as presented by his Zurich-based disciple, Karl Bürkli, was the target of Kautsky’s 1893 *Der Parlamentarismus, die Volksgesetzgebung und die Sozialdemokratie*. For the debate about direct legislation in the Second International, see M. Vuilleumier, ‘Le courant socialiste au XIXe siècle et ses idées sur la démocratie directe’, pp. 338–46.

<sup>68</sup> A good enough indication of this is the Francophone fate of Kautsky’s *Der Parlamentarismus*, which was translated by Georges Sorel’s disciple, Édouard Berth, and prefaced by Jean Jaurès when it was published in French as *Parlementarisme et Socialisme* in 1900.



decisions. In the words of one historian, the Commune attempted to answer the question of how to give a form 'to the government of the people, emanating from the people, without being oppressive of the people'.<sup>69</sup> For example, in the programme of the Central Electoral, Republican, Democratic, and Socialist Committee of the 11th Arrondissement, the practical organisation of the Commune was thus explicated: 'the State is the people governing itself, by a national convention of revocable representatives named by direct, organised universal suffrage; the people reserving [their right to] the discussion and sanction of all constitutions and organic laws'.<sup>70</sup> Such assertions did not prevent some Communards from expressing their doubts about the value of universal suffrage, and, indeed, most believed voting should be made subordinate to any properly post-imperial republic.<sup>71</sup> Memories of the failure of republican representative institutions in 1848, ending in a coup d'état disingenuously made in the name of restoring universal suffrage, still loomed large. But certain incidents during the Commune also underscored feelings of ambivalence with regard to France's larger revolutionary inheritance. For instance, when the Executive Commission of the Commune, unable to ward off the onslaught of the Versaillais troops, proposed imitating the *Montagnards* of 1793 by creating a Committee of Public Safety, it provoked an open revolt. The initiative shocked the more anti-authoritarian members of the Commune, among whom the artist and Proudhonian, Gustave Courbet. Courbet justified his opposition to the Committee of Public Safety by proclaiming: 'I desire that all titles or words associated with the Revolution of 89 and 93 only be applied to that era. Today, they no longer have the same meaning and can no longer be used with the same exactitude and sense.'<sup>72</sup> Before doing his part to defend the Commune in IWMA propaganda, Marx himself identified an irrepressible nostalgia for the Jacobins at work during the Franco-Prussian War, which he took to be a vestige of a certain French provincialism. In a 14 September 1870 letter to the Belgian socialist and fellow IWMA member César de Paepe, he found it 'essential that events put an end once and for all to this reactionary worship of the past'.<sup>73</sup> Such critical voices insisted that it was impossible to bring to life a revolution with the vocabulary of a prior revolution. Critics past and present of the return to the French Revolution during the Paris Commune have argued that to engage in such anachronism prevented contemporaries from

<sup>69</sup> J. Rougerie, *Paris libre 1871* (Paris: Seuil, 2004 [1971]), p. viii. <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>72</sup> G. Bourgin and G. Henriot (eds.), *Procès-verbaux de la Commune de 1871*, 2 vols. (Cœuvres-et-Valsery: Ressouvenances, 2002 [1945]), vol. II, pp. 36–37.

<sup>73</sup> *MECW*, vol. XLIV, p. 80.

understanding the real tasks of their attempt at revolution while fostering counter-productive histrionics in the process.<sup>74</sup> Certainly, while exacerbating internal divisions within the Commune's government, the Committee of Public Safety oversaw the fall of Paris and its own destruction. Consequently, the end of the Commune could smugly be described in the establishment republican bromide of the early Third Republic as a victory for the representatives of universal suffrage over a fractious minority.

After this latest political trauma, radical socialist activism was largely circumscribed henceforth to the social sphere. One could interpret this development as indicative of the triumph of the bourgeois constitutional state, even if this same development would likewise provide the basis for the anti-parliamentarianism of revolutionary syndicalism years later. Between 1871 and 1886, French republicans generally identified popular sovereignty exclusively with universal suffrage. For instance, Jules Barni's *Manuel Républicain* treated 'direct legislation' as an unrealisable and impossible ideal, and during the centennial celebrations of the French Revolution, the official republican commemoration of the French Revolution intentionally revolved more around the year 1789 than the year 1793.<sup>75</sup> Among French socialists, Jean Jaurès sought to preserve the memory of 1793, and his 'socialist history' of the Revolution examined the Constitution of Year I as the fully realised expression of popular power controlling the action of its representatives. But there were limits to how inspiring such a constitution could be in the context of the Third Republic, and Jaurès crucially did not advocate the subordination of laws to popular discussion and voting as revolutionaries did in 1793.<sup>76</sup> If historians have shown that within the rank and file of the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO) at the beginning of the twentieth century many militants were attracted to socialism by a more Jacobin image of the French Revolution, a republican state based on universal manhood suffrage progressively became in the eyes of many the only tangible political vehicle for achieving socialism. Thus, a large

<sup>74</sup> See the suggestive essay by O. Le Trocquer, "'Une seconde fois perdu". L'héritage de la Révolution et sa transmission, de 1848 aux années 1880' in Wahnich (ed.), *Histoire d'un Trésor Perdu*, 225–82, as well as D. Chang, 'Reading and Repeating the Revolutionary Script: Revolutionary Mimicry in Nineteenth-Century France', in K. Baker and D. Edelstein (eds.), *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), pp. 181–98.

<sup>75</sup> J. Barni, *Manuel Républicain* (Paris: Baillière, 1872), pp. 33–34.

<sup>76</sup> On Jaurès and historiography about the French Revolution in the fin-de-siècle era and within the larger context of European socialism, see J.-N. Ducange, 'La transmission socialiste de la Révolution française au XIXe siècle' in Wahnich (ed.), *Histoire d'un trésor perdu*, 321–44.

segment of the SFIO opportunely gravitated towards the strategic exigencies of parliamentary manoeuvring within a party system, in accordance with whose logic the revolutionary use of the gun was replaced by the moderation of the ballot box.<sup>77</sup> It was in the light of this shift, one concomitant with shifts in how the French Revolution was remembered, that Georges Sorel denounced the dishonest exploitation of memories of France's revolutionary past in his 1908 *Réflexions sur la Violence*, declaiming: 'Parliamentary socialists, who would like to utilise the memory of the Revolution in order to excite the ardour of the people and who, at the same time, ask them to put all their confidence in parliamentarism, are very inconsistent, because they are themselves working to ruin the epic whose prestige they wish to maintain in their speeches.'<sup>78</sup>

Since the end of the nineteenth century, socialists have generally favoured republican government, but the recurrent interest in direct government as a democratic ideal illustrates tensions dividing socialists to this day, similar to those separating Ancient from Modern conceptions of politics identified long ago by Benjamin Constant and others. The question debated in all such discussions has been whether republican government should make citizens' participation in political life less demanding or if it should force citizens to invest more of their lives in politics. Buttressed by the constitutional aspirations of 1793, recurring demands for putting into practice direct democracy since the French Third Republic have often become entangled in how to change the nature of political representation within the existing constitutional framework. And unsurprisingly apt to condemn the excesses of left-wing militancy critical of conventional notions of political representation, conservative voices have found little difficulty retorting, just as they did in 1848 and 1871, that radical justifications for resistance to political power held by republican governments, even if made in the name of redefining democratic sovereignty, legitimate the repression of their subversive proponents.

The ideal of direct democracy never burned as brightly among socialists as it did momentarily during the final year and a half of the Second Republic preceding the coup d'état (even if then, it was largely only a dim candle burning for a scattered diaspora forced from Paris). Afterwards, it would be re-invoked from time to time, acting as an occasional barometer for dissatisfaction with political representation in parliamentary democracy, but the disappointments wrought by the Revolution of 1848 and

<sup>77</sup> See on this subject, M. Rebérioux, 'Les tendances hostiles à l'État dans la SFIO (1905-1914)', *Le Mouvement social*, 65 (October-December 1968), 21-37.

<sup>78</sup> Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1908]), pp. 91-92.

the Second Empire which followed changed forever the manner in which this democratic ideal was discussed.<sup>79</sup> The political context between the electoral law of 1850 and the Bonapartist coup was critical in this regard. If socialist contemporaries debated the merits of a much more active participation of the French people in their government during the waning years of the Second Republic, thereby resuscitating a heroic democratic ideal that could be dated back to 1793, they did so out of much anguished reflection about the failure of a revolution in which they had placed their hopes yet over which events quickly proved they had little control. As the nineteenth century wore on and universal suffrage became the legitimate constitutional norm, it became harder, no matter what one's ideological orientation, to be so optimistic as to believe that simply finding a better legislative mode for the expression of popular sovereignty was the political panacea for the problems of post-revolutionary parliamentary democracy.

<sup>79</sup> In the Third Republic, ideas about direct legislation initially inspired by the mid-century debate about popular sovereignty were recast in terms of their relevance to the use of referendums. In this vein, Jaurès's *La Revue socialiste* republished some excerpts from Rittinghausen's Second Republic writings along with others by the Belgian publicist Emile de Laveleye. See 'Le Référendum', *La Revue Socialiste*, 9 (1889), 327–39.

## 5 Working-Class Socialism in 1848 in France

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*Samuel Hayat*

The Revolution of 1848 was a major turning point in the history of French political thought. Conservatism, liberalism, and republicanism all underwent profound transformations. However, the most important transformation may well be one that is often overlooked: the invention and the spreading of a distinctive working-class socialist ideology, along with the formation of a national labour movement.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, after the June insurrection, this working-class socialism shattered intellectual and political fields. Liberals and conservatives saw the labour movement as the most dangerous threat to society, leading to new alliances. Moderate and democratic republicans were opposed on the question of whether to support this working-class socialism and their opposition became an organising feature of the French political field.<sup>2</sup> Finally, socialism itself, which was until then largely considered as social science developed by harmless theorists, transformed into a revolutionary political ideology.<sup>3</sup>

How can we account for the fact that this working-class socialism has rarely been studied, particularly as its effects were so great on the history of political thought? A major reason is that workers did not generally express themselves through the publication of books, contrary to the

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the history of the French working class in the nineteenth century, see B. H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labour Movement, 1830–1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); W. H. Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labour from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); G. Noiriel, *Workers in French Society in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Berg, 1990); R. Magraw, *A History of the French Working Class*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> M. Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848–1852* (Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'homme, 1983); A. Coutant, 1848, *Quand la République combattait la Démocratie* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2009); S. Hayat, *Quand la République était Révolutionnaire. Citoyenneté et Représentation en 1848* (Paris: Seuil, 2014); S. Hayat, 'The revolution of 1848 in the history of French republicanism', *History of Political Thought*, 36/2 (2015), 331–53.

<sup>3</sup> On the history of French socialism, see J. Droz (ed.), *Histoire Générale du Socialisme, 1: Des origines à 1875* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972); J. Birnberg (ed.), *Les Socialismes Français, 1796–1866 : Formes du Discours Socialiste* (Paris: Éditions Sedes, 1995); P. M. Pilbeam, *French Socialists Before Marx: Workers, Women and the Social Question in France* (Teddington: Acumen, 2000).

thinkers usually studied in intellectual history. Therefore most studies of the nineteenth-century French working class are divided between two trends: on the one hand, 'social history', focused on economic history and sometimes cultural history; on the other hand, 'intellectual history', focused on expert socialist thinkers and theories. Both implicitly consider the political ideas of the workers themselves, the 'parole ouvrière',<sup>4</sup> as secondary – either to the economic infrastructures or to the ideas of expert thinkers. If we want to study the history of working-class thought and to document the creation in 1848 of a new ideology embedded in the working class, it is thus necessary to turn our attention to the more minor or mundane texts written by workers: rules of labour organisations, claims and petitions, pamphlets and manifestos.

The point of this chapter is to show how the Revolution of 1848 gave birth to a distinctive working-class democratic-socialist ideology that we can provisionally call working-class socialism. Working-class socialism was an ideology aiming at the emancipation of the proletariat through the democratic association of workers. It was irreducible to what could be called learned or expert socialism, i.e. socialist thought produced by professional thinkers and writers. It was anchored in the workers' organisations themselves, and resulted from the organised workers' interpretation of the 1848 Revolution, and in particular one of its main features: the adoption of universal male suffrage.

## I The Emergence of Working-Class Thought

In order to write a history of the political thought of the workers, the first problem is to locate this thought. How can we determine what is 'real' working-class thought and what is the expression of only a small minority of workers? After all, if some workers speak and debate, does it follow that they are utterly unrepresentative of the majority? This suspicious stance is well founded but it may lead to discarding working-class thought without looking at its content, focusing only on the social position of its speaker. As Jacques Rancière put it in at the beginning of *Proletarian Nights*, 'is it possible that the quest for the true word compels us to hush so many people? What exactly is the meaning of this evasion that tends to disqualify the verbiage of every proffered message in favour of the mute eloquence of one who is not heard?'<sup>5</sup>. However, Rancière's solution is not entirely satisfactory, as it reformulates – in an arguably more

<sup>4</sup> J. Rancière and A. Faure (eds.), *La Parole Ouvrière: 1830–1851* (Paris: Fabrique, 2007); J. Rancière, *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Verso Books, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Rancière, *Proletarian Nights*, p. 33.

sympathetic way – the exclusion of workers from the production of political thought. Indeed, according to Rancière, the workers think, but they do so as humans, not as workers: it is only when they stop being workers, during their daydreams or their nightly meetings, that they actually become thinkers. On the contrary, here I would like to focus on political thought produced not by individual workers outside of work, but by workers that speak and write as workers, on behalf of workers. In that respect, I will provisionally consider working-class thought as the intellectual production of organised workers: not necessarily workers in trade unions or parties – those did not exist during the first half of the century – but workers engaged in some sort of collective organisation and, more importantly, some form of collective intellectual activity. Working-class thought can then be defined by its material context: it is composed of ideas collectively or individually produced by organised workers engaged in the process of constructing labour organisations. It is true that these workers were only a minority of the people who worked in France; but industrial workers were themselves a minority: there were only around 4 million workers in the middle of the century, a third of whom were women, with most of them working in small-scale industries.<sup>6</sup> As there were far more employed in agriculture, should we thus discard industrial workers since they were not representative of real workers? On the contrary, we should try to understand how this contradiction was constituent of the labour movement and how it evolved throughout the nineteenth century. The same can be said about the organised urban industrial workers: they are not representative as such, but they have a ‘representative claim’, i.e. they claim to speak on behalf of all the workers.<sup>7</sup> Therefore by labelling their ideas ‘working-class thought’, we do not mean they are the ideas of the majority of the workers. We mean that they are presented and constructed by organised workers as the ideas of the working class, anchored in the situation of workers, collectively discussed and produced on behalf of the working class.

With that definition, working-class thought can be said to emerge when some workers started to organise and to produce political thought with the intention to speak on behalf of workers as a whole. As such, working-class ideas were largely absent from French political thought before the nineteenth century. The reason is that the idea of a ‘working class’ was uncommon under the *Ancien Régime*: industrial work was then organised through a complex co-operative system, in which the trades had a legal

<sup>6</sup> R. Price, *A Social History of Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), p. 197.

<sup>7</sup> M. Saward, *The Representative Claim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).



existence and pretty much defined the identity of the workers. There was not much place for individual or collective discussion about labour in general. As William Sewell puts it, 'both masters and workers were subjected to the collective discipline of the corporation, which regulated everyone and everything in the trade'.<sup>8</sup> Trade organisations produced a distinction between workers of different trades that was sometimes more important than the differences inside a given trade between workers of different statuses – journeymen and masters. Therefore it rendered quite absurd the idea of a 'working class' as a collective subject unified by a common experience of exploitation – let alone the ability to produce something called 'working-class thought'.

The Revolution of 1789 changed all that, in at least three ways. First, in 1791, the Le Chapelier law and the d'Allarde decree destroyed the whole trade system: corporations were dissolved and any form of trade organisation became illegal.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the economy, previously controlled rigidly by hierarchical corporations with fixed rules, suddenly became disorganised. All trades became free and the traditional ways of harmonising wages and controlling the job market in each trade disappeared. A second change was that the normative ideals of the revolution changed the way workers could envision their situation. Even if it was no structural necessity that artisans became *sans-culottes*, many of them did (especially in Paris and in Lyon), and one should not underestimate the penetration of revolutionary ideas among workers.<sup>10</sup> The combination of these two changes led to a third: the emergence of a large and protean movement aiming at renewed control over the economy by the workers, but reinterpreted through the prism of revolutionary values. This movement cannot be described as a 'labour movement' in the contemporary sense of the phrase. It was mostly triggered by the will to continue organising themselves the same way as before the revolution, but taking into account the legal, social, and conceptual changes it caused.

However, this change in the framework in which workers acted and thought had an important effect: they could not simply use the same means as before the revolution. They had to reflect collectively upon their organisations and the way they could construct devices to control their economic activity. This situation constituted one of the main

<sup>8</sup> W. H. Sewell, 'Artisans, factory workers, and the formation of the French working class, 1789–1848' in A. R. Zolberg and I. Katznelson (eds.), *Working-class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> S. L. Kaplan et P. Minard (eds.), *La France, Malade du Corporatisme?: XVIIIe-XXe Siècles* (Paris: Belin, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> A. Soboul, *The Parisian Sans-culottes and the French Revolution, 1793–4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

triggers for the emergence of working-class thought: it had become a necessity for workers who wanted to pursue their traditional goals, born under the *Ancien Régime*, to think about the ways they could organise themselves and to translate their claims into a vocabulary that was acceptable in the post-revolutionary public sphere. An example of such a process of induced reflexivity can be found in the history of the *prud'hommes*, the representative labour courts created in Lyon in 1806 to solve conflicts between merchants and workers.<sup>11</sup> As Alain Cottureau observed, the Revolution of 1789 and the 1791 laws created a new situation. On the one hand, they destroyed traditional hierarchical, corporative work relations. On the other hand, they promoted a language of equality and liberty. The combination of the two provided workers with new arguments to defend the concept of equal representation of workers and merchants in the negotiations about the cost of work (*le tarif*), and more generally in arbitration of conflicts. A new conception of rights and justice, and new quasi-judicial institutions such as the *prud'hommes*, resulted from the intertwining of co-operative culture and the values of the new regime. In the debates in and about the *prud'hommes*, we can see the appearance of a distinctive political thought, centred on the problem of the organisation of work and economic relations, based on norms that blend co-operative culture and revolutionary ideals<sup>12</sup>.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, it was thus possible to see the first signs of distinctive working-class thought, embedded in the organisations that emerged from the paradoxical situation of induced reflexivity created by the revolution: a collective will on the part of the workers to continue regulating the economy, but a new legal and conceptual framework in which this regulation did not naturally fall into place. Nevertheless, this collective will was mostly expressed by diverse and often unrelated groups, 'most' of them still divided among different trades or *corps d'état* and hostile journeymen's associations, the *compagnonnages*.<sup>13</sup> Workers reflected upon their situation, but the idea

<sup>11</sup> A. Cottureau, 'Justice et injustice ordinaire sur les lieux de travail d'après les audiences prud'homales (1806–1866)', *Le Mouvement Social*, 141 (1 October 1987) 25–59; A. Cottureau, 'Droit et bon droit', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 57/6 (2002), 1521–57; A. Cottureau, 'La désincorporation des métiers et leur transformation en "publics intermédiaires": Lyon et Elbeuf, 1790–1815' in S. L. Kaplan and P. Minard (eds.), *La France, Malade du Corporatisme ? : XVIIIe–XXe Siècles* (Paris: Belin, 2004), pp. 97–145.

<sup>12</sup> The same could be said about mutual aid societies and co-operatives. See M. D. Sibalis, 'the mutual aid societies of Paris, 1789–1848', *French History*, 3/1 (1989), 1–30; J. Rougerie, 'Le mouvement associatif populaire comme facteur d'acculturation politique à Paris de la révolution aux années 1840: continuité, discontinuités', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 297 (1994) 493–516.

<sup>13</sup> É. Coornaert, *Les Compagnonnages en France: du Moyen-Âge à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1966).

of a collective representative subject that could produce a unified political thought aiming to defend the interests and the point of view of all workers was scarcely present.

William Sewell showed that the rhetoric of class consciousness and class struggle appeared in labour discourses after the Revolution of July 1830.<sup>14</sup> It was a way for workers to reformulate their corporative language and claim rights, especially the right to association, of which they were deprived by the new regime. We should add that this reformulation extensively used not only the vocabulary of the Revolution of 1789, on which Sewell focuses, but also the distinctive vocabulary of representative government. The latter became a clearly formulated political project during the restoration, in the midst of a movement that was then called liberalism.<sup>15</sup> A group of thinkers and politicians, the *doctrinaires*, and, in particular, François Guizot, theorised representative government as government by representation.<sup>16</sup> Society was left free, but not sovereign, and the most apt men in society, those with the better knowledge of it and the best ability to use reason, the *capacités*, were in charge of selecting those among them who should govern. The July Revolution gave power to these liberals, making it possible to apply their project. These liberals, influenced by the principles of 1789 but also willing to strictly control society – and especially the poor – set the outlines of an economic government that placed work and workers into a new area of political action, in what Giovanna Procacci called the ‘government of poverty’.<sup>17</sup> Workers were not considered as divided by their trade, but as one category subjected to poverty. This enabled research on poverty to be carried out, for example, in a study presented by Villermé in 1840 to the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* (Academy of Moral and Political Science) in his *Tableau de l’état physique et moral des ouvriers* (Table of the physical and moral state of the workers), as well as the creation of government plans to fight poverty which was its logical complement. All this contributed to seeing the poor or labourers as a unified and homogeneous group.<sup>18</sup> The implementation of a liberal representative government and, in particular, the attempt to find policies based on reason and public interest,

<sup>14</sup> Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*.

<sup>15</sup> A. Jardin, *Histoire du Libéralisme Politique: De la Crise de l’Absolutisme à la Constitution de 1875* (Paris: Hachette, 1985); L. Girard, *Les Libéraux Français, 1814–1875* (Paris: Aubier, 1985); P. Nemo and J. Petitot (eds.) *Histoire du Libéralisme en Europe* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> P. Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> G. Procacci, *Gouverner la Misère: La Question Sociale en France (1789–1848)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> M. Gribaudi, *Paris Ville Ouvrière: Une Histoire Occultée (1789–1848)* (Paris: La Découverte, 2014).

revealed a new group, subject to unified policies and characterised by their poverty and the fact that they were workers. Because this creation of a unified group of workers was concomitant with the freeing up of different possibilities for society to organise itself, this group was then left with the opportunity to speak and act on its own behalf.

If it is true that the shift from the diverse conditions of craftsmen to the belief in the existence of a unified class was related to the practice of representative government, it was nevertheless achieved concretely within specific groups. In this respect particular importance must be granted to the republican groups, which constituted places where radical liberals, disappointed with the new government, met workers who tried to regain some control over economic relations in the co-operative tradition. This led to the progressive radicalisation of the advanced liberals and to the emergence of a common, republican identity, which incorporated the idea of improving the fate of the largest and poorest class.<sup>19</sup> One of the results of this politicisation of the working-class question, which occurred at the same time as a change in the treatment of workers by the government, was that, beginning with the Revolution of 1830, the term 'proletarian' acquired a new meaning for a growing number of workers: a class identity, intrinsically linked to their status as producers, one which transcended the boundaries of particular trades and was marked by its exploitation by the bourgeoisie. This affected it to the point that, 'from 1840 the distinctiveness of the "working class" was a received truth in all worker circles'.<sup>20</sup> It was only under the July regime, and after the encounter with its concept of work (particularly the liberal refusal to grant power to the guilds), that workers – granted, only a minority – started to restructure their action in ways that transcended the barriers of trades, notably by establishing newspapers that were led and written exclusively by workers (*L'Artisan*, *Le Journal des Ouvriers*; and *Le Peuple, Journal des Ouvriers, Rédigé par Eux-mêmes*), and also by entering republican societies.<sup>21</sup> For the first time, an idea appeared as a distinctive labour idea, anchored in both the corporative tradition and in republican values, and inseparable from the workers' will to organise and to exert a measure of control over

<sup>19</sup> E. L. Newman, 'La blouse et la redingote: l'alliance du peuple et de la bourgeoisie à la fin de la Restauration', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 47 (1975), 513–35; P. M. Pilbeam, 'Republicanism in early nineteenth-century France, 1814–1835', *French History*, 5/1 (1 March 1991), 30–47; J.-C. Caron, 'Elites républicaines autour de 1830: la Société des Amis du Peuple' in M. Vovelle and R. Monnier (eds.), *Révolution et République: l'Exception Française, Actes du Colloque de Paris I* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1994), pp. 498–510.

<sup>20</sup> T. Judt, *Marxism and the French Left: Studies in Labour and Politics in France 1830–1981* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*.

the economy: association. The notion of association, which 'has a clearer political connotation, that of challenging the social order'<sup>22</sup> than the terms 'corporation' or 'organisation', acquired the status of a 'Messianic formula'<sup>23</sup> under the July regime. After 1830, several plans appeared to promote the unification of the diverse workers' associations. In 1833, a republican shoe maker, Zael Efrahem, formulated, in very strong terms, the need for trade associations to be replaced by a workers' association unifying the different trades.<sup>24</sup> In 1840, Agricol Perdiguier published the *Livre du Compagnonnage* in which he described the journeymen's customs and songs and advocated a union of their rival associations.<sup>25</sup> And in 1843, drawing on these projects, the 'pariah' Flora Tristan published *L'Union Ouvrière*, a vibrant call to working-class unity.<sup>26</sup>

On the eve of 1848, working-class thought was the result of the successive reformulations and re-institutionalisations of co-operative culture consecutive to the Revolutions of 1789 and 1830. After 1789, the universalistic revolutionary rhetoric was used to justify new, more egalitarian relations of negotiation, in each trade, between merchants and workers. There was no socialism involved: working-class political thought remained oriented by trade division and by co-operation (or, more precisely, negotiation) between classes. After 1830, the language of class unity and class struggle appeared. But what was criticised was mostly the fact that the workers were prevented from associating to defend their collective rights. The perspective was not the abolition of the wage system or capitalism, but a fair recognition of the distinctive interest of the working class, and its antagonism towards merchants and owners. Socialism (i.e. the expert socialism of Fourierists, Cabet) existed and provided radical solutions to the social question. Many workers were attentive to these solutions. But no distinctive working-class socialism had emerged, and socialist ideas were not embodied in institutions or institutional projects.

## II The Democratic Experience of 1848

This is the distinctive contribution of the Revolution of 1848 and the major change it had on working-class thought: before 1848, socialism was

<sup>22</sup> A. Gueslin, *L'Invention de l'Économie Sociale : Le XIXe Siècle Français* (Paris: Économica, 1987), p. 135.

<sup>23</sup> L. A. Loubère, 'The intellectual origins of French Jacobin Socialism', *International Review of Social History*, 4/3 (1959), 422.

<sup>24</sup> Z. Efrahem, *De l'association des Ouvriers de tous les Corps d'État* (Paris: Imprimerie A. Mie, 1833).

<sup>25</sup> A. Perdiguier, *Le Livre du Compagnonnage* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1841).

<sup>26</sup> F. Tristan, *Union Ouvrière* (Paris: Prévot, 1843).

advocated only by a minority of organised workers, and when it was advocated it was always in reference to a certain form of expert socialism. After 1848, socialism became consubstantial with workers' projects, and socialist workers took great care to distance themselves from expert socialists. As such, this was a turning point in the history of both the labour movement and socialism. Whereas the political failure of expert socialists and the catastrophe of June 1848 could have rendered socialism totally unacceptable to workers, it ended up not being the case. As early as autumn 1848, forms of organised labour reappeared, frequently attempting to put socialism into practice.<sup>27</sup> In order to explain the effect of the Revolution of 1848 on working-class thought, one has to take into account the changes in both the concrete life conditions of the organised workers and their representations about their role – the combination of the two resulting in what can be coined as the working-class experience. We can distinguish four main factors that modified this experience in 1848.

Firstly, working-class experience was transformed by the massive encounter with socialism. It is true that some members of the fringes of the working class were already members of socialist sects – actually they had played a central part in the development of working-class movements before 1848.<sup>28</sup> But 1848 constituted a real change of scale. During the weeks that followed the February Revolution, hundreds of newspapers and clubs were created, and the most popular of them were often centred on a socialist figure such as Étienne Cabet or François-Vincent Raspail.<sup>29</sup> For the first time in history, socialists were able to talk publicly to a large audience. More importantly, their ideas started to be discussed in mainstream newspapers: the moderate republican *Le National* became involved in heated debates with Proudhon on the creation of economic value, while the popular comical newspaper *Le Charivari* became filled with caricatures of socialist leaders.<sup>30</sup> And in every newspaper that

<sup>27</sup> R. Gossez, *Les Ouvriers de Paris. 1: L'Organisation, 1848–1851* (Société d'histoire de la Révolution de 1848, 1968), pp. 327–64.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, M. Riot-Sarcey, *Le Réel de l'Utopie : Essai sur le Politique au XIXe Siècle* (Paris: A. Michel, 1998); J. Beecher, *Victor Considérant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); T. Bouchet, V. Bourdeau, E. Castleton, L. Frobert, and F. Jarrige (eds.), *Quand les Socialistes Inventaient l'Avenir: Presse, Théories et Expériences : 1825–1860* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> R. Gossez, 'Presse parisienne à destination des ouvriers, 1848–1851', in J. Godechot (ed.), *La Presse Ouvrière, 1819–1850: Angleterre, États-Unis, France, Belgique, Italie, Allemagne, Tchécoslovaquie, Hongrie* (Bures-sur-Yvette, Essonne: Société d'histoire de la Révolution de 1848, 1966), pp. 123–90; P. H. Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>30</sup> T. Menuelle, *Le Charivari contre Proudhon* (Paris: Publications de la Société P.-J. Proudhon, 2006).

reproduced the parliamentary debates (which was the case for most of them in 1848), people could read the speeches made by the few socialist representatives: Victor Considerant, Proudhon, Pierre Leroux ... Some of these speeches were then printed and sold separately, such as the famous defence of socialism by Proudhon on 31 July 1848. All this contributed to socialists and socialism becoming familiar to workers on a much larger scale than just the well-read minorities that composed most socialist movements before 1848. It is difficult to measure the penetration of socialist ideas in the working class, but if we consider the electoral results of the socialist candidacy of Raspail in December 1848, we can see that it fared relatively well only in the most working-class urban neighbourhoods such as la Croix-Rousse in Lyon or the centre of Paris. If we also consider the votes for the democratic-socialist Ledru-Rollin, who started claiming he was a socialist in September 1848, it adds up to 15 per cent in Paris and in Lyon.<sup>31</sup> In a few months, from a fringe movement, socialism became a legitimate part of the new political field.

Secondly, this new familiarity of workers with socialism was multiplied for organised workers, especially in Paris. Indeed, from March to May 1848, workers were represented at the Luxembourg Palace, the former High Chamber, by elected representatives of each trade in the *Commission de Gouvernement pour les Travailleurs*, known as the Luxembourg Commission.<sup>32</sup> This Commission was created after demonstrations of workers on 28 February demanding a Ministry of Labour. The Provisional Government did not want to grant the workers such a department, but it agreed to create a Commission that was supposed to debate social reforms to be presented to the Constituent Assembly after its election. The Commission was chaired by the two most radical members of the Provisional Government, the socialist writer Louis Blanc and the worker conspirator Albert. Even if the aim of the government was to satisfy the workers quickly and to get rid of these two cumbersome colleagues, the Luxembourg Commission constituted a major site for the politicisation of the Parisian workers. First, representatives of each trade were put in touch with socialist thinkers (Louis Blanc, but also the Fourierists Constantin Pecqueur and François Vidal) and debated social reforms with them. Second, they played a direct role in the resolution of

<sup>31</sup> S. Hayat, 'Se présenter pour protester. La candidature impossible de François-Vincent Raspail en décembre 1848', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 64/5 (22 octobre 2014), 869–903. This implementation of socialism was then confirmed by the legislative election of May 1849; see J. Bouillon, 'Les démocrates-socialistes aux élections de 1849', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 6/1 (1956), 70–95.

<sup>32</sup> F. Bruand, 'La Commission du Luxembourg en 1848' in Francis Démier (ed.), *Louis Blanc: Un Socialiste en République* (Paris: Créaphis, 2006), pp. 107–31.



conflicts between bosses and workers and in the launch of socialist experiments such as the tailors' co-operative settled in the former Clichy prison. Finally, after the dissolution of the Luxembourg Commission, former delegates, especially members of the bureau of the Commission such as its president, Pierre Vinçard, constituted the core of people making new attempts to build a unified working-class movement. In June, they formed a *Société des Corporations Réunies*, whose manifesto claimed the necessity of an autonomous emancipation of the proletariat, and launched a newspaper, *Le Journal des Travailleurs*, which covered news from all trades. After 1848, these former delegates participated in almost every important working-class project on the national scale, from the *Banque du Peuple* in 1848–49 to the *Société de la Presse du Travail* in 1851. During the Second Empire, some of them (for example, the typographers Georges Duchêne and Louis Vassbenter) participated in the working-class milieu from which emerged the Parisian section of the First International.

These two factors primarily concerned the direct and indirect relations between workers and socialists. But 1848 was also a moment of confrontation with the bourgeoisie and the conservatives, which played a role in the definition of the representation of the political field. As a result, a third factor in the rapid spread of socialism among the working class during the Second Republic is the common repression radical activists, socialists, and workers had to face on several occasions.<sup>33</sup> As early as 16 April 1848, when Parisian workers faced the hostility of the Provisional Government and the National Guard during their demonstration in favour of social reform, they were accused in both reactionary and republican newspapers of being communists, secretly conspiring for Blanqui. After the invasion of the Assembly on 15 May, club leaders were arrested, including Albert, the vice-president of the Luxembourg Commission, which was brutally shut down and had its papers seized. Finally, when people started to try to make sense of the June insurrection, socialism and radicalism appeared as the main motivation of the insurgents, both for socialists like Proudhon and for conservative republicans – the whole parliamentary investigation into the events of May and June was dedicated to proving that these events were socialist and radical conspiracies to overthrow the regime. Therefore it is no surprise that the repression that followed the December 1851 coup d'état targeted radical republicans, socialists, and working-class leaders. For this reason, during the Second Republic socialism and working-class activism started to be interpreted as one and the same phenomenon and

<sup>33</sup> J. M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France 1848–1851* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

this transformation in the representation of workers affected the political opportunity structures in which the working-class movement developed: the alliance between socialists, radical republicans, and working-class activists became an obvious necessity from 1848 onwards, both in France and in exile.

The spread of socialism, the Luxembourg Commission, and repression led to the multiplication of occasions for direct or indirect encounters between socialists and workers. However, it caused a major transformation in working-class thought only because it met a profound change in the symbolic frame through which workers considered their place in society – the fourth factor of the modification of working-class experience in 1848. Alain Cottureau showed how the workers' sense of justice was modified by the idea of civil equality after 1789; William Sewell asserted that the Revolution of 1830 triggered a renewed interest for association because of the new linguistic framework in which workers considered themselves. *Mutatis mutandis*, the Revolution of 1848 created a new context in which the meaning of being a worker was deeply transformed. It has often been remarked that for a brief period of time, in spring 1848, workers became revered as a new aristocracy, defined by work; as the song went, 'Chapeau bas devant la casquette, À genoux devant l'ouvrier!' ('Hats off to the cap, On your knees before the worker!'). This honeymoon period did not last. However, it was the apex of a larger movement that outlasted spring 1848: the political emancipation of the male workers, i.e. universal male suffrage. The transformation of citizenship subsequent to this change had a profound impact on the way the workers saw themselves. To assess the extent of the effect of universal male suffrage on the representations workers had of themselves, one has to remember that democracy, in 1848, did not only mean the election of legislators who then could act however they pleased.<sup>34</sup> Since our present conception of democracy is almost purely electoral, we tend to forget what it entailed then. But if we consider a male worker in early 1848, we can see that the revolution turned his day-to-day political experience upside down. First, he had the right to vote for the sovereign assembly. In 1848, that meant choosing any list of names he wanted; he was not constrained by parties or lists of candidates. If he lived in a big city, he also could participate in club

<sup>34</sup> The effects of the transformations of the meaning of citizenship and democracy on the political history of France are at the core of Pierre Rosanvallon's conceptual history trilogy: P. Rosanvallon, *Le Sacre du Citoyen: Histoire du Suffrage Universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); P. Rosanvallon, *Le Peuple Introuvable Histoire de la Représentation Démocratique en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); P. Rosanvallon, *La Démocratie Inachevée. Histoire de la Souveraineté du Peuple en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

meetings in which potential candidates presented themselves. In Paris, 100,000 people regularly attended club meetings.<sup>35</sup> Of course, the board of the club was elected, so workers could participate in the election of club representatives. Workers also became members of the National Guard, experiencing equality with their neighbours, and they could vote for their officers at different levels (in at least three different elections in April 1848).<sup>36</sup> If a worker was in need and decided to enrol in national workshops, as tens of thousands of workers did, he also could vote for his officers there.<sup>37</sup> Workers who were members of an organised trade, a *corps d'état*, were also invited to vote for their representatives at the Luxembourg Commission. To sum up, in 1848 workers went from exclusion from all forms of collective decision to a permanent and multi-dimensional electoral activity. Equality in decisions, i.e. popular sovereignty, was no longer just a value: it had become an actual experience. This constituted the new framework through which workers thought of themselves and their relations to society: they were political actors, members of the sovereign body. As a result, their interpretation of socialism, discovered on the many occasions described earlier, was utterly dependent on this new representation of the working class as part of the sovereign.

### III Working-Class Socialism as Democratic Political Thought

This junction between socialism and democratic capacity was the main effect of the Revolution of 1848 on working-class political thought. It determined the nature of working-class socialism as a specific socialist ideology, distinct from expert socialism, in the pre-eminence it gave to the collective capacity of the workers as part of the sovereign. Until the Revolution of 1848, the different socialist ideologies were based on the idea that socialism was a social science, designed to explain the real rules organising society.<sup>38</sup> Of course, they had normative founding principles, including an interest in the condition of the workers, but the latter were

<sup>35</sup> Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>36</sup> L. Hinker, *Citoyens-Combattants à Paris, 1848–1851* (Paris: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> D. C. MacKay, *The National Workshops: A Study in the French Revolution of 1848* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933).

<sup>38</sup> P. Mercklé, *Le Socialisme, l'Utopie ou la Science ? La 'Science Sociale' de Charles Fourier et les Expérimentations Sociales de l'école Sociétaire au XIXe Siècle*, Thèse de doctorat, Université Lumière (Lyon) (2001); L. Rignol, *Les Hiéroglyphes de la Nature : Le Socialisme Scientifique en France dans le premier XIXe siècle* (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2014).

seen as people who should be educated, whose emancipation relied on learning the scientific systems produced by a few great minds. This idea did not disappear after the Revolution of 1848, but the experience of equality gave way to a new understanding of socialism. Indeed, the guarantee of political equality and popular sovereignty translated into a will-oriented relation to the economic sphere: reformulated by workers, socialism became less doctrinal and more embedded in the actual activity of associated workers.

The first aspect of this transformation of socialist thought was the renewal of the idea of association in 1848.<sup>39</sup> The necessity for workers to associate was recognised in the Decree of 25 February establishing the right to work:

The Provisional Government of the French Republic is committed to guarantee of the livelihood of the worker through labour. It is committed to the guarantee of work for all citizens. It recognises that workers must associate to enjoy the benefit from their labour.<sup>40</sup>

During the first weeks of the new regime it was commonly believed, even beyond socialist ranks, that the association would replace the wage system in the long run. Even the very moderate *National* wrote in April 1848 that ‘workers will cease sooner or later to be employees and will be both workers and masters. We think that the association is the way that should lead them to this goal’.<sup>41</sup> This eagerness to promote the association as a peaceful way of reforming society did not stop with the June insurrection; on the contrary, the Constituent Assembly voted that a three-million-franc envelope be distributed among associations. As a result, especially when one considers the great difficulties for working-class activists to directly engage in politics after June, many associations were created.

Most of these new associations were organised following a strongly democratic model. Consider, for example, the Clichy tailors: their workshops were closed by the government in July 1848, but only a few dozen workers (out of a total of 1,600) decided to create a new association, keeping the name *Association Fraternelle des Ouvriers Tailleurs* and settling on the Faubourg Saint-Denis.<sup>42</sup> In this association, all the persons in charge (the manager, the surveillance committee, and a ‘fraternal jury’

<sup>39</sup> M. Riot-Sarcey, *Le Procès de la Liberté. Une Histoire Souterraine du XIXe Siècle en France* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016).

<sup>40</sup> *Recueil Complet des Actes du Gouvernement Provisoire*, par Émile Carrey (Paris: Auguste Durand, 1848), p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Le National*, 16 avril 1848.

<sup>42</sup> P. A. Cochut, *Les Associations Ouvrières. Histoire et Théorie des Tentatives de Réorganisation Industrielle Opérées depuis la Révolution de 1848* (Paris: Bureau du National, 1851), pp. 28–49.

supposed to solve disagreements) were directly elected by the biannual general assembly of the workers. Far from being an exception, this democratic form of organisation became widespread in the associations created in 1848–49, most notably thanks to the activity of former delegates of the Luxembourg Commission. They wrote a template that could be used by any association and that was published on different formats – often with modifications, preambles, and commentaries – and triggered the publication of several handbooks intended for workers who might want to create their own association. The former Luxembourg delegate Antonyn Romand published such a *Manuel des Associations Ouvrières* in 1849, claiming it had been approved by the *Conseil d'Encouragement des Associations Ouvrières* set to allocate the three-million-franc credit.<sup>43</sup> In his version of the rules of a workers' association, it was once again the general assembly of the workers that elected the manager and the board, and Romand explicitly advised that each worker should be a member of the board at some point during his career.<sup>44</sup> Even if Romand did not express a socialist ideology per se in this book, the idea of a democratic management of economic activity itself entailed a socialist transformation of society. In 1850, another former Luxembourg delegate published anonymously his own *Manuel des Associations Ouvrières*, whose preamble was much more aligned with the socialist language used in spring 1848.<sup>45</sup> But his proposal was remarkably similar to Romand's: a manager and different committees elected by the general assembly made up of the totality of the associated workers. The democratic experience of 1848, transposed into the economic realm, gave birth to socialist experiments in the form of democratically organised associations.

However, this in itself did not constitute working-class socialism as a distinctive ideology. What mattered in that regard is that the proliferation of associations was accompanied by new discourses that gave a socialist frame to these associative attempts. Indeed, democracy in 1848 was not only a procedure; it was also a particular spirit, a specific conceptualisation of the nature of the relations between citizens. After 1830, the emergence of class consciousness had mixed the idea of class struggle together with political inferiority: workers were subject to

<sup>43</sup> The minutes of this committee, which ran from July 1848 to July 1850, are at the Archives Nationales, see F/12/4619.

<sup>44</sup> A. Romand, *Manuel des Associations Ouvrières* (Paris: Guiraudet et Jonaust, 1849), pp. 18–21.

<sup>45</sup> *Manuel des Associations Ouvrières, par un Délégué du Luxembourg* (Paris: Michel, 1850). See also L. Hocdé (ed.), *Almanach des Associations Ouvrières pour 1850* (Paris: Almanach des Associations). Hocdé was the president of the short-lived *Union Essénienne* – a biblical name for this *Association Universelle, Égalitaire et Fraternelle des Producteurs et des Consommateurs* that mixed quotes from the Old Testament and from socialist thinkers.

exploitation because the law was made by the rich. So for many organised workers, it was self-evident that with the end of political privilege in 1848, the end of exploitation should follow. The republican motto 'liberty, equality, fraternity' was understood by organised workers in a socialist way: there could be no real fraternity in a system in which some people were masters and others servants. In that sense, the abolition of the wage system was both a practical necessity in the new associations and a democratic imperative. This idea could be found in countless socialist pamphlets in 1848.<sup>46</sup> But more importantly, it was also present in the discourses of organised workers themselves. For example, in 1850, the bronze fitter Jules Mallarmet, a former delegate of the Luxembourg, wrote in *Le Salut du peuple*:

Proletarians say: we won't stand usury . . . we will not depend upon a capitalist for the activity or inactivity of our arms, because we have the right . . . to the means of production; or for our wage . . . because we have the right to all the fruits of our work; it is a violation . . . of the sacred dogma of liberty, equality, fraternity to put some in the dependence of others for their material or economic conditions of existence. This one is master of his fellow being who can give or refuse the work, the salary . . . There is here a question of right, of liberty, of equality, of fraternity . . . The proletarian no longer wants to be, because of the social law, the associate of a boss; because there should be no more bosses, only equal workers.<sup>47</sup>

For Mallarmet, who was part of many different projects launched after the dissolution of the Luxembourg Commission, there could be no real Republic while the system of wages still existed. According to him, political democracy relied on the existence of an economic democracy, which itself necessitated the replacement of the wage system by a system of association, based on the necessity 'to universalise, to democratise property'.<sup>48</sup> After 1830, the trade organisations were already supposed to form the basis of a new associationist polity that could be capable of possessing a collective power. But after 1848, the equality of political capacity became a reality for workers, in many different aspects of their life. The authority of the boss, the merchant, the owner, was a direct breach in the logic of political equality: if workers, as citizens, had the capacity to decide, equally with any other citizen, the destiny of the country, then they certainly were able to organise the process of production themselves. Similarly, it should be noted that the authority of expert

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, the book by the former secretary of the Luxembourg Commission, the socialist François Vidal, *Vivre en Travaillant! Projets, Voies, et Moyens de Réformes Sociales* (Paris: Capelle, 1848).

<sup>47</sup> 'Exigences du prolétariat', *Le Salut du Peuple*, 5 (1850), p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> 'Rachat', *Le Salut du Peuple*, 5 (1850), p. 34.

socialists also became irrelevant: the democratic experience of workers was alien to the scientific logic of utopian socialism.

In that regard, the establishment of democratic associations of production was part of a larger political socialist project. Its specificity was that it would not be realised from above, by the government, following projects of social reformation, but from below, through the federation of associations. Once again, the former Luxembourg delegates were the first to promote such a socialist and democratic strategy. In the manifesto of the *Société des Corporations Réunies*, published in early June 1848, they claimed they wanted to create 'a powerful organisation that nothing could break' through 'the formation of popular sections, unitarily centralised by the committee of the workers' delegates'.<sup>49</sup> Their plan was simple:

In each trade there should be a committee in charge of the specific interest of the trade, whose mission would be to maintain the wage and to prepare the association . . . Our role is to organise the relations among all the industries.<sup>50</sup>

This idea of an association of associations was not entirely new in 1848. It was the result of the long process described by William Sewell: the transformation of the conception of workers as a heterogeneous social category divided by trades into the idea of a unified working class.<sup>51</sup> But what was new in 1848 was that the individuals composing this working class were now members of the sovereign body. The associative project was no longer the expression of a class interest: it was partly the realisation of the sovereignty of the people in the economic sphere. The argumentation in this manifesto constituted a landmark in the history of the labour movement:

The State, that is the persons who govern the people, exists only thanks to the taxes paid by everyone, taxes that obviously come from the producer . . . So the State is the people, the producer. That being said, why would the people wait, maybe in vain, for a social organisation that could at most refund it with a small part of what it gives voluntarily every day to the one who exploits it? No more intermediary between the people and the government! May the people organise itself without waiting any longer! Isn't it sovereign, the producer of all wealth? . . . Come, proletarian, come and sign your emancipation!<sup>52</sup>

Not only did the new regime imply that all men should be equal and thus there should be no division between employees and bosses; it also meant that the capacity of the united working class was unlimited. Hence the

<sup>49</sup> *Manifeste des Délégués des Corporations (ayant siégé au Luxembourg) aux Ouvriers du Département de la Seine* (1848), p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>51</sup> Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*.

<sup>52</sup> *Manifeste des Délégués des Corporations (ayant siégé au Luxembourg) aux Ouvriers du Département de la Seine* (1848), p. 2.



association of associations could be considered as equivalent in the economic realm to the democratic state in the political one. Even more, its realisation would render the state itself useless – a feature this working-class socialism had in common with most socialist theories, but with a distinctive element: the state would not become useless thanks to the scientific rectitude of social organisation, but because the exercise of the collective will of the workers through their association would constitute the only real expression of popular sovereignty.

However, the *Société des Corporations Réunies* was short-lived: it disappeared after those June Days. The different projects that took over faced repression: they were accused by the government of being political associations, which became strictly controlled after the insurrection of June 1848. Indeed, their project was undoubtedly socialist, especially when they intended to organise not only production, but also credit (i.e. investment) and consumption, as was the aim of the *Union des Associations de Travailleurs*. This association, which brought together 104 associations of production, was founded in 1849 by Jeanne Deroin with the aim of completely reorganising the economy following the principles of reciprocity among workers.<sup>53</sup> Some of its leaders, including Deroin and Pauline Rolland, were arrested in 1850 and sent to jail. The last of these attempts to realise socialism through the federation of associations was the *Société de la Presse du Travail*. It was founded in February 1851, and even though its existence was very brief because of the repression that followed the coup d'état, it epitomised the socialist turn in the history of working-class thought. Its board was composed of workers of different trades, and it explicitly aimed to renew trade corporations, but in a democratic manner. It was run by a Surveillance Council 'representing the totality of shareholders'<sup>54</sup> composed of three workers (who could not be employers) of each trade – a model clearly inspired by the Luxembourg Commission. This council then elected a Social Commission of twenty-seven members for a year, which then elected three managers. In the first (and only) Commission were the typographer Jean-Baptiste Comble, the leather currier Bernard Consigny, the carpenter Alexandre Douard, the painter Alphonse Drevet, the tailor Pierre Wahry (a long-time republican activist and promoter of association), the doctor to the poor Joseph Panet, and the teacher Auguste Desmoulins (the son-in-law of Pierre Leroux). After the coup d'état, a collective warrant of arrest was issued and many of them were deported to Algeria or Cayenne in Guyana.

<sup>53</sup> J. Deroin, *Lettres aux Associations sur l'Organisation du Crédit* (Paris: Sandré, 1851).

<sup>54</sup> *Almanach des Corporations Nouvelles* (Paris: Société de la Presse du Travail, 1852), p. 41.

The preamble to the manifesto of this association, published in its *Almanach des Corporations Nouvelles*, lengthily explained why it was necessary to rethink and renew corporatism. According to its authors, workers' associations could no longer limit themselves to the traditional insurance functions of mutual aid societies: they had to experiment and prepare the collective property of the means of production. The leaders of the *Société* conceived it as an organisation that should inherit the long tradition of corporatism, through its different evolutions. But, as they explained, the Revolution of 1848 had profoundly transformed this tradition:

The political revolution of 1848, by giving to every man, independently of any monetary condition, the right to elect and to be elected, gave back to every citizen the free disposal of [all the revenue collected from taxes]. This great act has been accomplished by universal suffrage. But from this great act follows another one. Universal suffrage gave to all the taxpayers the disposal of the product of the taxes, now we need a similar institution that makes all the workers participate in the administration of the wealth they have produced. This institution ... is the Universal Association. The workers have understood that; and this is why, to the idea of a pure resistance against the lowering of wages, they added the idea of association aiming at the ownership of the means of production, association that raises them to the condition of civil servants of the corporation, and that makes progressively disappear all the distinctions of employees, bourgeois and capitalists.

In this text, the link was clearly established between political equality and economic equality realised through the organisation of workers. The *Société* aimed to translate democratic equality and sovereignty into the economic sphere, and was itself organised on democratic principles. This version of socialism was therefore both inherently democratic, as it was based on the conception of collective capacity that became the norm after the Revolution of 1848, and rooted in the distinctive history of working-class organisation. It entailed the suppression of the frontier between the political (as the reign of the collective will) and the economic (as the realm of the uncoordinated pursuit of individual interests): the workers were sovereign *as workers* and their sovereignty was performed through the organisation of labour. As such, only a centralised control of the economy by the workers themselves, now 'civil servants of the corporation', could ensure the realisation of democracy with all its consequences.

In 1848, the idea of democratic equality was experienced in the political sphere, understood not only as the election of legislators, but as the spreading of universal male suffrage in many activities. This idea of democratic equality was used to renew the principles and practices of trade organisation. Reinterpreted in the economic realm, popular

sovereignty entailed a democratic form of socialism, based on the equal capacity of all workers in economic decision-making. As such, we can say that 1848 gave birth to a distinctive working-class form of democratic socialism in France, which had a great impact on the future history of the French organised workers and on the history of French political thought. Even though the restoration of the Empire and the repression prevented most workers' associations from continuing their work, this conception of socialism irrigated the organised workers' political thought after the end of the Second Republic, up to the foundation of the French section of the International Workingmen's Association. This working-class socialism is too often overlooked by historians of socialist ideas, due to an exclusive focus on great authors in the historiography of political thought. But the penetration of socialist ideas in the working class did not only take the shape of a vertical inculcation of principles formulated by expert thinkers. It also entailed the collective creation of a working-class thought deeply linked with the actual experience of organised workers. The question of the interaction between this working-class socialism and other ideologies such as Marxism remains open, but one thing is for certain: it should be studied by granting the same intellectual agency to all the actors involved, including manual workers.

## 6 1848 and British Political Thought on 'The Principle of Nationality'

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*Georgios Varouxakis*

The French Revolution of 1848 again changed the aspect of affairs, and in a few months nearly all Europe was convulsed. The revolutions which then took place were essentially revolutions of nationality, and though most of them were for a time suppressed, they nearly all eventually accomplished their designs. . . . the French Government, in the manifesto which was issued by Lamartine in the March of 1848, while disclaiming any right or intention of intervening in the internal affairs of other countries, asserted, perhaps more strongly than had ever been before done in an official document, the legitimacy of all popular efforts for national independence, and clearly intimated that when such risings took place the Republic would suffer no foreign intervention to suppress them.<sup>1</sup>

Walter Bagehot observed once that '[e]very generation is unjust to the preceding generation; it respects its distant ancestors, but it thinks its fathers were "quite wrong"'.<sup>2</sup> One does not need to subscribe to related Freudian theories to agree that there is some truth in that remark, and I want to focus on an example of such inter-generational misrepresentation. This article aims to challenge a retrospective reading of mid-nineteenth-century British thought introduced by writers such as James Bryce, A. V. Dicey, Ernest Barker, Harold Laski, Alfred Zimmern, and others, during and following the Great War, and adopted by later historiography. According to that view, Victorian liberals naïvely welcomed the 'principle of nationality' enthusiastically and uncritically, only to be disabused (those still surviving) by the ultimate outcomes of its adoption. As this reading would have us believe, precious few Victorian liberals had any reservations about the principle of nationality. When they mention any exceptions, such accounts invariably refer to Lord Acton, whose

<sup>1</sup> W. E. H. Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Classics, 1981 [1896]), vol. I, p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> W. Bagehot, 'Matthew Arnold on the London University' (1868) in N. St John-Stevass (ed.), *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, 15 vols. (London: The Economist, 1974), vol. VII, p. 388.

purported farsightedness is anyway attributed to his distance from British mainstream attitudes thanks to his Catholicism and familiarity with Central European politics and thought.<sup>3</sup>

In the following pages I first aim to show that, contrary to that later perception, the dangers and limitations of what came to be known as 'the principle of nationality' were all too clear to most nineteenth-century British liberal thinkers and all too often asserted by them, both before and after 1848. On the contrary, it is unequivocal and indiscriminate support for 'the principle of nationality' that is hard to find during the late 1840s and 1850s. Second, it is also part of my argument that, as a result of the experiences of the Revolutions of 1848–49 and their aftermath, such reservations intensified.

## I The Charge against the Victorians

In his essay 'The Principle of Nationality and its Applications', published in 1918, James Bryce claimed:

Seventy years ago [1848] many an active and sanguine mind in Europe and America was aflame with *what then began to be called the Principle of Nationality*.<sup>4</sup> Those were the days when Despotism seemed the great enemy to human progress and human happiness; and despotism was worst where the despot ruled over an alien people. So the sympathy, both of America and of Britain, or at least of British Liberals (among whom was then to be found a great majority of the men of light and leading), went out . . . in 1848 . . . to the Italian revolutionaries, to the Polish revolutionaries, to the Czechs in Bohemia, to the Magyars in Hungary . . . Men hoped that so soon as each people, delivered from a foreign yoke, became master of its own destinies, all would go well for the world. The two sacred principles of Liberty and Nationality would, like twin guardian-angels, lead it into the paths of tranquil happiness, a Mazzinian paradise of moral dignity, a Cobdenite paradise of commercial prosperity and international peace.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For an interpretation that stresses the Continental nature of Acton's thought on nationality see: T. Lang, 'Lord Acton and "the Insanity of Nationality"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 63/1 (2002), 129–49. An additional reason why the myth of liberal enthusiasm for 'the principle of nationality' had much purchase later was that such a narrative was repeatedly asserted by conservative commentators who wished to attack liberal politicians and their philosophical worldview. Thus, in the 1850s, 1860s, and later decades, 'Conservatives associated the idea of nationality with liberals and their particular perspective on the international sphere.' R. Smittenaar, 'Keeping Europe in order: Conservative international political thought in Victorian Britain, 1854–1880', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen Mary University of London (2014), pp. 153–86. For more on conservative criticisms of 'the principle of nationality' see R. Smittenaar, 'Feelings of alarm': Conservative criticism of the principle of nationality in mid-Victorian Britain', *Modern Intellectual History*, 14/2 (2017), 365–91.

<sup>4</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> J. Bryce, *Essays and Addresses in War Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), p. 141.

Bryce was not alone or idiosyncratic in these strictures regarding the Victorians. Ernest Barker talked no less dismissively of ‘the easy-going Victorian cult of nationality’ in 1919.<sup>6</sup> And this is what Harold Laski was to write in 1932: ‘Seventy years ago Mazzini’s lyric enthusiasm for the nation-state seemed to almost every generous mind in Europe – Lord Acton is the only notable exception I know – a gesture of emancipation. I doubt whether any body of generous-minded men would display that certitude now.’<sup>7</sup> The indictment of the purportedly naïve Victorians for their alleged enthusiastic endorsement of ‘the principle of nationality’ had started already from before the war and intensified during the earlier stages of the Great War. In 1914 A. V. Dicey noted that his contemporaries found mid-Victorian ideas such as belief in the principle of nationality difficult to understand.<sup>8</sup> In 1915 Alfred Zimmern was telling his Sociological Society audience: ‘This theory that the Nation-State is the normal and proper area of government at which believers in free institutions should aim, is sometimes known as “the principle of Nationality”’: and many loose-thinking people believe that it is one of the causes for which we are fighting in the present war.’ Zimmern had just blamed a Victorian thinker for the popularity of the principle in question when he said that those who disagreed with him would no doubt ‘invoke the authority of John Stuart Mill, whose words on the subject in his book on “Representative Government,” have passed almost unchallenged for two generations as the pure milk of Liberal doctrine’.<sup>9</sup> Zimmern was to criticise the mid-Victorians again in November 1917.<sup>10</sup>

## II ‘Nationality’ before 1848

Though Bryce was roughly right to suggest that what he was talking about ‘then began to be called the Principle of Nationality’, there had been talk

<sup>6</sup> E. Barker, ‘Nationality’ (1919), in P. Kelly (ed.), *British Political Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 89–97, at p. 94

<sup>7</sup> H. J. Laski, ‘Nationalism and the future of civilisation’ (1932) in H. J. Laski, *The Danger of Being a Gentleman and Other Essays* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939), pp. 189–226, at p. 191.

<sup>8</sup> A. V. Dicey, ‘Introduction to the Second Edition’ in *Lectures on the Relation between Law & Public Opinion in England during the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1948 [1914]), pp. xxiii–xciv, at pp. lvi–lvii.

<sup>9</sup> A. E. Zimmern, ‘Nationality and Government’ (paper read before the Sociological Society on 30 November 1915), in A. Zimmern, *Nationality and Government with Other War-Time Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1918), pp. 32–60, at p. 46. Zimmern had criticised Mill already in June 1915 in another lecture. See ‘True and false nationalism’ in Zimmern, *Nationality*, pp. 61–86, at pp. 64–65.

<sup>10</sup> A. E. Zimmern, ‘The passing of nationality’ in Zimmern, *Nationality*, pp. 87–100, at pp. 93–94.

of 'nationality' before 1848, though the expression 'the principle of nationality' itself was rare before 1848.<sup>11</sup> And when 'the great principle of nationality' was used before 1848, it was usually by Irish nationalists to describe their own cause.<sup>12</sup> 'Nationality' and 'the principle of nationality' are not exactly the same thing. 'The principle of nationality' was used, increasingly after 1848, to denote the principle that each nation should have its own state and that each state should be composed of one nation. It was a political doctrine. Now, the term 'nationality' on its own is much more multivalent and has meant a number of different things in history. It was certainly used for some decades before 1848 (though not as often as after 1848). Lucien Febvre has argued that 'nationalité' was a new word that was for the first time cited in the sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française*, in 1823.<sup>13</sup> And more recently another French historian, Gérard Noiriel, has argued that the word 'nationalité' was first employed in 1807 in a novel by Madame de Staël.<sup>14</sup> However, in English it can be found being used quite earlier, in the eighteenth century. In his biography of Samuel Johnson (published in 1791), James Boswell reports several times Dr Johnson's complaint, in conversations from the years 1773, 1775, and 1783, that the Scotch 'have ... that extreme nationality'. And, 'Talking of the success of the Scotch in London, he imputed it in a considerable degree to their spirit of nationality'. As far as Boswell – a Scotsman – was concerned, Dr Johnson credited him for being 'wonderfully free from that nationality'.<sup>15</sup> These uses seem to be referring to (potentially extreme) attachment to one's national or ethnic group. Such attachment did not necessarily have to imply or lead to political programmes or demands.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> I am not concerned here with the – extremely interesting, but different – question of whether or not there was a developed sense of nationhood (and what kind of conception of nationhood it was) in terms of how the English understood themselves in the Victorian era. On this question see: H. S. Jones, 'The idea of the national in Victorian political thought', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 5/1 (2006), 12–21; P. Mandler, "'Race" and "nation" in mid-Victorian thought' in S. Collini, R. Whatmore, and B. Young (eds.), *History, Religion and Culture: British Intellectual History 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 224–44.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. 'Ireland: Mr O'Connell in Cork – The Great Dinner', *The Examiner*, 13 April 1844. For another use, though in a rather different sense, see *The Examiner*, 8 November 1840.

<sup>13</sup> L. Febvre, *L'Europe: Genèse d'une Civilisation* (Paris: Perrin, 1999), p. 264.

<sup>14</sup> G. Noiriel, 'Socio-histoire d'un concept. Les usages du mot "nationalité" au XIXe siècle', *Genèses: Sciences Sociales et Histoire*, 20 (1995), 4–23, at 7.

<sup>15</sup> J. Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980 [1791]), pp. 531, 586, 599, 1210.

<sup>16</sup> Among the several meanings of 'nationality' distinguished in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this one corresponds most to '2. Nationalism; attachment to one's country or nation; national feeling.' *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. X, pp. 234–5 [hereafter *OED*]. For brief and far from comprehensive attempts at definitions of 'Nationality' see 'Nationality', in R. H. I. Palgrave (ed.),



In various texts and speeches in the decades prior to 1848 one finds 'nationality' routinely used to denote strong attachment to one's nation, often (but not always) with negative connotations – sometimes signifying excessive attachment to one's country at the expense of other nations or justice. Thus, in 1832, at a meeting of the National Political Union, the working-class radical Rowland Detrosier said: 'The union which formerly existed among the people might be summed up in the word nationality, by which men were led to believe that to cheat other nations was the surest way of advancing their own interests. Instead of seeking to elevate themselves, their only care was to depress their neighbours.'<sup>17</sup> And the Irish MP Richard Sheil exclaimed in a speech in the House of Commons in 1836: 'perish the bad nationality, that substitutes for the genuine love of country a feeling of despotic domination upon your part, and of provincial turbulence upon ours'.<sup>18</sup> But the word was also used to signify sometimes a group of people composing a nation or an ethnic group that did not possess its own state.<sup>19</sup> Alternatively, 'nationality' was sometimes used to denote the attainment by a group of its independence, the achievement of statehood by a national group, or the unification of disparate parts of that group under one state.<sup>20</sup> Though all meanings are related in different degrees, it is this last use that comes closest to the meaning of 'the principle of nationality'.

We have already seen that 'nationality' was raised in relation to Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s, not least after the creation of Daniel O'Connell's *Repeal Association* as of 1830. Such discussions intensified as Irish discontents increased by the famine in the 1840s.<sup>21</sup> Metropolitan thinkers and politicians were anxious about Irish nationalists 'inflaming national animosity between two countries, which, from physical causes such as no

*Dictionary of Political Economy*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1899), vol. III, p. 5; A. Kemiläinen, *Nationalism: Problems Concerning the Word, the Concept and Classification* (Jyväskylä: Kustantajat Publishers, 1964), pp. 47–8; Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nationalism: A Report by a Study Group of Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939); G. Varouxakis, 'Nationality' in A. S. Leoussi (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), pp. 232–34.

<sup>17</sup> 'National Political Union – Reform Festival', *The Examiner*, 19 August 1832.

<sup>18</sup> *The Examiner*, 3 April 1836. See also 'Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of Canada', *The Examiner*, 10 February 1839.

<sup>19</sup> This is roughly covered in *OED* definition 5 ('A nation; Freq[ue]ntly, a people potentially but not actually a nation. Also occas., a racial or ethnic group').

<sup>20</sup> According to the *OED*, definition 4: 'Separate or complete existence as a nation; national independence or consolidation'.

<sup>21</sup> See C. Kinealy, *Repeal and Revolution: 1848 in Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 1–127; M. Kelly, 'Nationalisms' in R. Bourke and I. McBride (eds.), *Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 447–69.

political revolution can remove, must always be either blessings or curses to each other'.<sup>22</sup> In addition, 'nationality' became an issue elsewhere within the British Empire in 1837–38 with the rebellion of the French Canadians led by Papineau in Lower Canada. It was frequently said in 1837 that 'the French or Papineau faction in Lower Canada . . . laboured to effect a distinct nationality'.<sup>23</sup> But not everybody in metropolitan Britain was unsympathetic to the claims of the Canadians. Some even chose publicly to expose the double standards involved in British sympathy for oppressed nationalities such as the Poles (the main beneficiaries of French and British sympathy at the time) when coupled with the hostility shown to French Canadian grievances. J. S. Mill was keenly interested in the Canadian affair for more than one reason. He was from very early on identified with the colonial reformers. But he was also keen to defend Lord Durham (who was sent to Canada to sort out the situation and wrote the Durham Report on what needed to be done), as he wished to see Lord Durham lead the distinct radical party in parliament that Mill envisaged in the 1830s. He criticised those who called the French insurgents 'rebels and traitors'. These words were 'totally inapplicable to them' according to Mill. The worst thing even their bitterest enemies were imputing to them was, simply, 'that being a conquered people, they cherish the feelings of a conquered people, and have made an attempt to shake off their conquerors'. But that was not treason: 'Is not this the conduct with which, when other parties were conquered, Englishmen have been called upon to sympathise, and to subscribe their money, and to proclaim their admiration of the sufferers and their abhorrence of the conqueror to every region of the earth? . . . what have the Canadians done other than the Poles?'<sup>24</sup> Mill took a similar line in all three of the articles he published at the time, insisting on the legitimacy of the French Canadians' grievances: 'most unquestionably our own sympathies are not with the victors, but with the vanquished, in that melancholy struggle'.<sup>25</sup> His preferred solution was not independence but rather what he took Durham's plan to be designed to achieve: 'This project . . . had the further

<sup>22</sup> That is what T. B. Macaulay wrote to the Young Ireland leader and editor of *The Nation* when the latter sent him his collection of Irish songs, *The Spirit of the Nation: Ballads and Songs by the Writers of 'The Nation'* (Dublin, 1845): 'Macaulay to Charles Gavan Duffy', 26 May 1845, in T. Pinney (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), vol. IV, pp. 259–60.

<sup>23</sup> *The Examiner*, 12 March 1837.

<sup>24</sup> J. S. Mill, 'Radical Party and Canada: Lord Durham and the Canadians' (January 1838), in F. E. L. Priestley and subsequently J. M. Robson (eds.) *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, 33 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963–1991 [hereafter: *CW*]), vol. VI, 407–35, at 414.

<sup>25</sup> Mill, 'Lord Durham and his assailants' (August 1838), in *CW*, vol. VI, 339–43, at 441.

advantage, that it was the only legitimate means of destroying the so-much-talked of nationality of the French Canadians.' According to Mill, Durham's plan would have the following effect:

It would compel them to consider themselves, not as a separate family, but an integral portion of a larger body; *it would merge their nationality of race in a nationality of country*;<sup>26</sup> instead of French Canadians it would make them British Americans; and this without bringing into their house and home, into their social and domestic relations, the customs of another people (which, whether practised on all of them or on a part, would be one of the last excesses of despotism), or establishing, as hitherto, over not only their necks but those of the English population, a petty oligarchy of the latter.<sup>27</sup>

Mill was imaginative or capacious enough in his understanding of 'nationality' for him to envisage the possibility of merged ethnic groups forming 'a nationality of country'. Others though attacked the very term and its fashionable use by groups with grievances within the British Empire or the United States. A characteristically titled article appeared in the radical weekly *The Examiner* in 1843: 'The Irish nationality fever, which so strongly and so morbidly affects the political patient with the idea that there are no ties in this world of any value except those of birth and race', had infected the other side of the Atlantic and was 'making its usual ravages upon public health and common sense.' In Canada the French party had flourished thanks to 'a close union with the English Liberals'. But now 'some of the Irish doctrines of the difference between Celt and Saxon have come to divide the Liberal allies, and the French Canadian is once more devoting himself to exclusiveness'. The consequence had been 'that the great division of Liberal and Illiberal tends to disappear'. The Catholics and the French were beginning 'to consider themselves and their interests as exclusively Catholic and French'. And to complete the picture, an Orange party, 'still in imitation of that great mother country of religious strife, Ireland', had also sprung up. The danger was clear of having 'an Ireland on the other side of the Atlantic'.<sup>28</sup>

But what about other people's nationalities questions? As we saw, Mill reminded the British public that in 1837 the French Canadians were not doing something very different to what the Poles had done in 1830–31, receiving strong British liberal sympathies. There had been in Britain great interest and agitation about particular national movements and revolutions declared in the name of national liberation in earlier decades, not least the Greek Revolution of the 1820s. But such interest was usually

<sup>26</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> Mill, 'Lord Durham's return' (December 1838), in *CW*, vol. VI, 447–64, at 458–9.

<sup>28</sup> 'The Nationality Fever', *The Examiner*, 9 December 1843.

concentrated on the particular movements and countries and the prospects of good, liberal, or democratic constitutions being adopted there, or the interests of 'Civilisation' or 'Europe' being at stake in the struggle. There was no sustained interest in 'Nationality' as such and 'the Principle of Nationality' had not yet emerged as a potent force in debates on the Greek war of independence.<sup>29</sup> I am thus not arguing that particular nationalities and their claims to self-government attracted no sympathy. They did. Greece in the 1820s and Poland in the 1830s and 1840s attracted much sympathy, especially in liberal-radical circles. The same was going to be the case with Italy and Hungary in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>30</sup>

The great numbers of exiles from the countries in question living and writing in London and other parts of Britain played a great role in such sympathetic engagements. There was already keen interest in continental politics and movements (of the kind that was to intensify in the 1850s)<sup>31</sup> in the ancient universities. And beyond Cambridge and Oxford the continental revolutions and movements 'found their most substantial middle-class support among the ranks of Dissent and within the bohemian precincts of London's literati'.<sup>32</sup> It was in those circles that the People's International League was established in 1847 'to "embody and manifest an efficient Public Opinion in favour of the right of every People to self-government and the maintenance of their

<sup>29</sup> According to Rosen, 'What is important here is that the claims to national self-determination by the Greeks played virtually no role in the public debate over Greece'. F. Rosen, 'Nationalism and early British liberal thought', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2/2 (1997), 177–88, at 180. Among the members of the London Greek Committee formed in 1823 to support the insurgent Greeks, the one member who did adopt national self-determination arguments and motives was Edward Blaquière, an Irishman with a peripatetic record of fighting for different South-European national liberation movements, *Ibid.*, 180–81; and F. Rosen, *Bentham, Byron and Greece: Constitutionalism, Nationalism, and Early Liberal Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 133–43. See also P. Stock, *The Shelley-Byron Circle and the Idea of Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> For some examples (among many) on Poland see 'The Parliament', *The Examiner*, 14 July 1833; 'Dinner to the Poet Campbell', *The Examiner*, 17 July 1836; 'Poland', *The Examiner*, 2 July 1842; 'Imperial Parliament – Annexation of Cracow', *The Examiner*, 6 March 1847. For examples of strong support for Hungary, some of them directed against anti-Hungarian articles in *The Times*, see 'Character and Claims of the Hungarians', *Examiner*, 7 July 1849; 'Defeat of the Hungarians', *Examiner*, 25 August 1849; 'The Libellers of Kosuth', *Daily News*, 3 January 1850.

<sup>31</sup> C. Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), pp. 97–105.

<sup>32</sup> M. C. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848–1874* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 71. For some of these alliances see M. Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). On Mazzini's appeal in Britain both before and after 1848 see M. Pellegrino Sutcliffe, *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2014).

own Nationality”’.<sup>33</sup> It was under the auspices of the ‘People’s International League’ that Mazzini published in English the article ‘Nationality and Cosmopolitism’ in the London *People’s Journal*.<sup>34</sup> But that sympathy, strong though it was in some cases, tended to be concentrated on particular ‘pet’ nationalities and their rebellions and aspirations, and did not assume the character of a generalised and consistent endorsement of the ‘principle of nationality’ in general.<sup>35</sup>

### III 1848: Lamartine, ‘*Nationalités Opprimées*’, and British Responses

Discussions on nationality intensified after March 1848, not least because of the news from Paris. As W. E. H. Lecky’s later assessment quoted in the epigraph of this article correctly claimed, it had been the French Provisional Government of 1848 through a Manifesto of its foreign minister, Lamartine, that had ‘asserted, perhaps more strongly than had ever been before done in an official document, the legitimacy of all popular efforts for national independence’. The new French foreign minister had already caused serious concern to diplomats because of a letter that he addressed on 27 February to members of the diplomatic corps. In that letter Lamartine tried to reassure everyone that France would keep ‘her loyal and sincere dispositions to maintain relations of good harmony with the powers which, like her, wished the independence of nations and the peace of the world’.<sup>36</sup> Rather inevitably, some experienced diplomats immediately commented that, given the composition of most major states at the time, the independence of nations and the peace of the world were not compatible aspirations.<sup>37</sup> But the

<sup>33</sup> Finn, *After Chartism*, p. 71; S. Mastellone, ‘Mazzini’s International League and the politics of the London democratic manifestos, 1837–50’ in C. A. Bayly and E. F. Biagini (eds.), *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 93–104.

<sup>34</sup> J. Mazzini, ‘Nationality and Cosmopolitism’, *The People’s Journal*, vol. III (1847), 258–94; now reprinted in G. Mazzini, *Scritti*, ecc., vol. XXXVI (Politica, vol. XII), 33–47.

<sup>35</sup> It is characteristic that the man who was to be seen later as the main defender of ‘nationality’ made rather disparaging remarks about claims for national liberation in 1831: ‘The unsettled state of Belgium, and the approaching struggle in Poland, appear to occupy and agitate the French people far more than that which is of greater importance to human kind than the very existence of Belgium and Poland taken together – their own struggle for good institutions’ [J. S. Mill], ‘French News [14]’ (*Examiner*, 6 February 1831), *CW*, XXII, 258–59.

<sup>36</sup> My translation. C. Pouthas (ed.), *Documents Diplomatiques du Gouvernement Provisoire et de la Commission de Pouvoir Exécutif, Février–juin 1848* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1953), vol. I, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> F. Bensimon, *Les Britanniques face à la Révolution Française de 1848* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2000), pp. 60–1.

concerns became much more widespread and public after Lamartine issued his famous *Manifeste aux Puissances*, a circular addressed by the new foreign minister to the diplomatic agents, dated 2 March and published on 6 March 1848.<sup>38</sup> One concern was the official repudiation of the treaties of 1815 (though accompanied by the reassurance that France did not intend to challenge the territorial arrangements imposed by those treaties by war). The other major issue was the declaration with regard to nationalities:

We avow openly, that *if the hour of reconstruction for certain oppressed nationalities in Europe or elsewhere, appeared to us to have sounded in the decrees of Providence; if Switzerland, our faithful ally since Francis I, were constrained or menaced in the movement which is taking place within her to lend an additional force to her band of democratic governments; if the independent states of Italy were invaded; if the attempt were made to impose limits or obstacles to their internal transformations, or to contest by force of arms their right of allying themselves with each other to consolidate a common country; the French Republic would consider itself at liberty to take arms for the protection of these legitimate movements of growth and nationality.*<sup>39</sup>

Lamartine undoubtedly found himself in a particularly delicate situation. On the one hand, he needed to please the gallery at home.<sup>40</sup> And the most vociferous members of the gallery at the time were the restless young men of the famous 'generation of 1820'. The latter had rejected King Louis-Philippe's July Monarchy exactly because they thought it was too pusillanimous in its failure to assist Poland, or annex Belgium, or stand up to 'l'Angleterre perfide' and the despotic Continental powers.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the Foreign Minister of the Second Republic was fully aware that any bold move to upset the European *status quo* would be interpreted as a repetition of the First Republic's record and would meet with the combined resistance of the other European powers. Hence the schizophrenic language used by Lamartine that first encouraged Polish, Irish, and other nationalists to expect succour from the French Republic, only

<sup>38</sup> Pouthas, *Documents Diplomatiques*, vol. I, 7–11. See the reporting in the British press (translated from *Le Moniteur* of 6 March 1848), 'History and progress of the French Revolution', *Examiner*, 11 March 1848.

<sup>39</sup> Translated by J. S. Mill, 'Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848', *Westminster Review*, April 1849, in *CW*, XX, 318–63, at 341; emphasis in the original.

<sup>40</sup> This was noted in Britain: see Henry Peter [Lord] Brougham, *Letter to the Marquess of Lansdowne, K.G., Lord President of the Council, on the Late Revolution in France*, 3rd edn. (London: James Ridgway, 1848), p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> See A. B. Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); H.A.C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy: A Political History of France 1830–1848* (London: Longman, 1988); P. Darriulat, *Les Patriotes: La Gauche Républicaine et la Nation 1830–1870* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 27–44, 171–212.



for him then to tell them that the Republic was at peace with the German states, Russia, and Britain and intended to remain so.<sup>42</sup>

Any such expectations raised in Ireland and among the Irish diaspora were of particular interest to the British.<sup>43</sup> And such expectations were raised high indeed. Now, it was perhaps an indication of the relative novelty of the use of 'nationality' outside Ireland (but also of its wide use among the Irish before 1848) that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Clarendon, wrote thus to the home secretary, in his official memorandum on the situation in Ireland a month after the Paris revolution (dated 27 March 1848): 'Such was the condition of parties – such the temper of the public mind – in a country which for years had been the scene of continued political agitation *in favour of an independent legislature and "nationality" as it was termed*<sup>44</sup> – when the grave events of the recent French revolution occurred.' The Paris events had given 'a sudden shock to public feeling in Ireland'. The immediate result was that 'the wildest dreams of every political agitator appeared to be realised'.<sup>45</sup> The British ambassador in Paris, Lord Normanby, held close contacts with Lamartine and made sure the British government's unease was clear to the French foreign minister, who tried his best to reassure the British that he had no wish to encourage the Irish. In one of the conversations he said something revealing. He told Normanby that he was amazed at the interpretation his manifesto had received in Ireland. 'When Normanby mentioned it, he laughed and said "Autant les nationalités d'Alsace ou de Bourgogne!"'<sup>46</sup> Normanby also wrote to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Clarendon, that, unlike what the Irish thought, Lamartine did not have them in mind when he talked of reviving nationalities: 'but here it was understood as much . . . as if the word

<sup>42</sup> L. C. Jennings, *France and Europe in 1848: A Study in French Foreign Affairs in Time of Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); J. Chastain, *The Liberation of Sovereign Peoples: The French Foreign Policy of 1848* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1988), pp 15–78.

<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that "Ireland" was not a static geographical entity. In Dublin and London the fears and anxieties of the authorities centred on the threat posed by Irish migrants.' J. Belchem, 'Britishness, the United Kingdom and the Revolutions of 1848', *Labour History Review*, 64/2 (1999), 143–58, at 144. Belchem also wrote: 'In the revolutionary excitement of 1848, Irish-American nationalism was to be carried forward, far ahead of "Young Ireland" itself, by identifying with the American mission of republicanism . . . It was in 1848, indeed, that Irish-American nationalism acquired its "Fenian" characteristics: republican separatism and physical force. The British authorities took the new threat extremely seriously.' *Ibid.*, 146. See also J. Belchem, 'Nationalism, Republicanism and Exile: Irish Emigrants and the Revolutions of 1848', *Past and Present*, 146 (1995), 103–35.

<sup>44</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> 'Clarendon to George Grey', 27 March 1848, quoted in J. Saville, *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 94.

<sup>46</sup> 'Normanby to Palmerston', 12 March 1848, quoted in D. N. Petler, 'Ireland and France in 1848', *Irish Historical Studies*, 24/96 (1985), 493–505, at 497.



*Poland* had been used'.<sup>47</sup> Despite these assurances, and no matter how sincere they might have been, Lamartine had to keep subtle balances within Paris. Thus on 17 March 1848 he received a deputation from the Irish community in Paris. As was reported in the official journal of the French government, the *Moniteur*, "'the flag of Ireland" was presented to the provisional government and Lamartine made a brief statement in which he praised the activities of Daniel O'Connell and expressed the hope that the Irish people would achieve their constitutional independence in the same way as they had secured their religious freedom'.<sup>48</sup> Clearly Lamartine had not been as cautious and diplomatic as the British Foreign Office would have wished. Normanby was reportedly 'appalled when he read the account of the reception'. He told Lamartine that his speech had been 'evidently too much of an expression of an opinion upon our internal concerns'. But he was 'more concerned about the acknowledgement of the Irish flag, which was a de-facto acknowledgement of Irish nationality'.<sup>49</sup> Though Lamartine was more careful in his next encounter, with a deputation of Irish Confederates, led by Smith O'Brien, and though the Irish nationalists were privately disappointed with Lamartine's reply to them, they could still put a positive spin on the situation in their paper, the *Nation*. Making a virtue of necessity, after Lamartine's reply to them that he wanted to deal with the whole of Great Britain and not with parts thereof, they asserted that Ireland needed no foreign assistance to attain her independence. 'What she needed was the recognition of her nationality. France has recognised it in ranking her with Poland, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy'.<sup>50</sup> Overall, most comments on the part of British establishment figures were to the effect that, though they would very much have preferred him not to have mentioned the part on 'nationalities' in the circular of March 1848, Lamartine did afterwards go out of his way to clarify that France was not encouraging any unrest in Ireland. The foreign secretary, Palmerston, was reassured from very early on.<sup>51</sup> Lord Brougham told the House of Lords on 11 April that he was satisfied with Lamartine's response to the requests of the 'traitors . . . and chiefly from Ireland', who paid him a visit in late March 1848.<sup>52</sup> And Lord John Russell, the prime minister,

<sup>47</sup> 'Normanby to Clarendon', 11 March 1848, quoted in Petler, 'Ireland and France', 497.

<sup>48</sup> *The Times*, 20 March 1848; Petler, 'Ireland and France', 498.

<sup>49</sup> Petler, 'Ireland and France', 498 ('Normanby to Palmerston', 18 March 1848).

<sup>50</sup> *Nation*, 8 April 1848. See more in: Petler 'Ireland and France', 499–502. Also P. Joannon, 'L'Irlande et la France en 1848', *Études Irlandaises*, 12/2 (1987), 133–54.

<sup>51</sup> See J. Saville, '1848 – Britain and Europe' in S. Freitag (ed.), *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp. 19–31, at pp. 20–22.

<sup>52</sup> H. P. Brougham, *Speech in the House of Lords on Italian and French Affairs, April 11, 1848* (London: James Ridgway, 1848).

trying to reassure parliament of France's peaceful intentions, said in February 1849 that 'although at the commencement of that revolution there were terms used in a circular of M. Lamartine's which certainly appeared to menace the peace of Europe and though there was, as I thought, a great deal too much jargon about "nationality"', he deemed Lamartine honourable and pacific.<sup>53</sup>

As Jonathan Parry has remarked, the sense of English superiority and 'immuneness to Continental diseases ... only became rampant in the early 1850s. In 1848–50 the atmosphere was more apocalyptic'.<sup>54</sup> It is in that context of anxiety that attitudes towards nationality have to be seen. There is no gainsaying that the failure of the Chartist march on 10 April 1848 gave considerable relief to those with most reasons to be anxious. But the anxiety was still there. It was only the day after, on 11 April 1848, that Lord Brougham gave a speech in the House of Lords on the affairs of Italy. Though he argued that Britain was safe and immune, he began by confessing that he had been looking 'with a deep concern' to all that had been going on 'in both the north and south of Europe'; and that as a result of 'the late changes' the prospect struck him 'with alarm, almost with dismay'.<sup>55</sup> Then it was in October that Brougham published his wholesale onslaught on everything the new Provisional Government of the Second Republic had done or declared. He reserved his strongest strictures for the Provisional Government's foreign policy, in the shape of Lamartine's *Manifeste*: 'Beyond all question this is the very worst thing that France has done, the most sinning against all principle, the most hurtful to herself, and to the world.' Brougham explained that he had to lift up his voice against 'that new speculation in the rights of independent States, the security of neighbouring governments, and indeed the happiness of all nations, which is somewhat the mode among political reasoners of our day, in other places as well as Paris; I allude to what is termed *Nationality*, adopted as a kind of rule for the distribution of dominion'. It seemed to be 'the notion preached by the Paris School of the Law of Nations and their foreign disciples, that one state has a right to attack another, provided upon statistically or ethnologically examining the classes and races of its subjects these are found to vary'. In an attempt to bring the matter home to his British readership, Brougham noted an example: 'The successors of the Red Republican [Robespierre] ... hold it to be quite clear that our Gracious Queen cannot continue to rule over Ireland, peopled as it is with Celts and Romanists.'

<sup>53</sup> Reported in *The Examiner*, 3 February 1949.

<sup>54</sup> J. Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 172.

<sup>55</sup> Brougham, *Speech in the House of Lords*.

He therefore felt called upon to 'protest altogether against this new-fangled principle of Nationality, as a ground of making, or of desiring to see made, any new political arrangement, or of attempting any new trimming of the Balance of Power'.<sup>56</sup>

Another uncompromising denunciation of 'nationality' was contributed by Nassau Senior: 'Among the attacks which have lately been made on that weak defence of civilisation, international law, this [Lamartine's] manifesto appears to be the boldest and the most mischievous.' The offer of assistance to oppressed nationalities, 'when translated into intelligible language, is an offer of the armed interference of France to detach from their existing government any portions of a composite empire, distinguished by race or language from their fellow-subjects, which she may think fit to consider oppressed, and called by Providence to separate independence'. Given that almost every kingdom in Europe was 'a union of distinct nations', this was, in fact, 'a threat on the part of France to interfere by force in the domestic concerns of almost every government in Europe – and to interfere for the express purpose of dismembering it'. Moreover; 'It is an open encouragement to *the barbarous feeling which leads men to quarrel because they differ in language or in race*; . . . and has done more, within the last year, to retard the civilisation of Europe than can be repaired during the remainder of the century.'<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere Senior wrote: 'This barbarous feeling of nationality . . . has become the curse of Europe. The tendency of events in Europe during the last 1,000 years has been towards the coalition of numerous small states with a few large ones.' That coalition had been 'partly the effect and partly the cause of improved civilisation'. But 'If England were divided into a heptarchy, or even if England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland were four independent nations, they would always be fighting one another, commercially or physically. To this coalition the feeling of nationality is opposed. Its ultimate tendency is to split the composite frame of every European sovereignty into hostile fragments.'<sup>58</sup>

These liberals at least were not that convinced that nationality would lead to 'a Mazzinian paradise of moral dignity, a Cobdenite paradise of commercial prosperity and international peace', *pace* Bryce.

<sup>56</sup> Brougham, *Letter to the Marquess of Lansdowne*, pp. 122–29.

<sup>57</sup> Emphasis added. N.W. Senior, *Journals Kept in France and Italy from 1848 to 1852, with a Sketch of the Revolution of 1848*, M.C.M. Simpson (ed.), 2 vols. (London: Henry S. King, 1871), vol. I, pp. 64–65.

<sup>58</sup> Senior, *Journals*, p. 262.

#### IV Defending the French (and Nationalities?)

But what about more radical liberals? There was one who publicly and extensively commented on the subject, in fact in response to Brougham in the first instance, coming up with the strongest defence of ‘nationality’ he ever offered. At first sight, J. S. Mill could be argued to justify Bryce’s argument about the exuberance of hopes based on nationality 1848. And yet, even that was far from an unambiguous endorsement. In the ‘Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848’, published in April 1849, Mill set himself the task of defending the conduct of the French Provisional Government that had ruled France between February and April 1848 against its British detractors, with particular reference to the pamphlet by Lord Brougham that we have discussed in the [previous section](#). There is little doubt about Mill’s predilections. By the beginning of 1847, he had increasingly been declaring himself ‘thoroughly disgusted with the state of public affairs’ in Britain.<sup>59</sup> He wrote in a letter that a violent revolution was ‘very much needed’ in England ‘in order to give that general shake-up to the torpid mind of the nation which the French Revolution gave to Continental Europe’.<sup>60</sup> In this state of mind, the French Revolution of February 1848 found him: ‘I am hardly yet out of breath from reading and thinking about it. Nothing can possibly exceed the importance of it to the world or the immensity of the interests which are at stake on its success.’<sup>61</sup> Thus Mill was clearly in revolutionary mood in the late 1840s, and to that extent, it would have been difficult for him to analyse the French Second Republic’s actions or declarations with complete detachment. He had been explicit about his partiality to the Provisional Government he was to undertake to defend a few months later: ‘I feel an entireness of sympathy with them which I never expected to have with any political party.’<sup>62</sup>

An important part of Mill’s ‘Vindication’ was dedicated to the Provisional Government’s foreign policy. Even Mill’s rhetorical skills were only partially sufficient to justify or explain away the contradictory double-speak of Lamartine which we have already discussed. One of the most difficult issues was the renunciation of the Vienna Treaties of 1815.<sup>63</sup> The other issue of foreign policy raised by Brougham was also addressed by Mill: ‘A few observations may be permitted on the extreme contempt with which Lord Brougham denounces what he calls “that

<sup>59</sup> ‘Mill to Chapman’, 9 March 1847, *CW*, XIII, 710.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Mill to Austin’, 13 April 1847, *CW*, XIII, 713–14.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Mill to Chapman’, 29 February 1848, *CW*, XIII, 731–32. See also *CW*, XXV, 1091–3, 1110–12; *CW*, XIII, 734.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Mill to Nichol’, 30 September 1848, *CW*, XIII, 739. <sup>63</sup> Mill, *CW*, XX, 343–44.

new-fangled principle . . . which is termed Nationality”'. Mill started with an onslaught on recent manifestations of national feelings on the Continent:

It is far from our intention to defend or apologise for the feelings which make men reckless of, or at least indifferent to, the rights of any portion of the human species, save that which is called by the same name and speaks the same language as themselves. These feelings are characteristic of barbarians; in proportion as a nation is nearer to barbarism it has them in a greater degree: and no one has seen with deeper regret, not to say disgust, than ourselves, the evidence which recent events have afforded, than in the backward parts of Europe, and even (where better things might have been expected) in Germany, the sentiment of nationality so far outweighs the love of liberty, that the people are willing to abet their rulers in crushing the liberty and independence of any people not of their own race and language.

Yes, things being as they were, Mill commented: ‘But grievous as are these things, yet so long as they exist, the question of nationality is practically of the very first importance.’ Thus: ‘When portions of mankind, living under the same government, cherish these barbarous feelings – when they feel towards each other as enemies, or as strangers, indifferent to each other – they are scarcely capable of merging into one and the same free people.’ They did not have ‘the fellow-feeling which would enable them to unite in maintaining their liberties, or in forming a paramount public opinion’. In such situations, the government was able, ‘by playing off one race and people against another, to suppress the liberties of all’. How could a free constitution have a chance in the Austrian empire, Mill asked, ‘when Bohemians are ready to join in putting down the liberties of Viennese – when Croats and Serbs are eager to crush Hungarians – and all unite in retaining Italy in slavery to their common despot?’ That was his reason for arguing: ‘Nationality is desirable, as a means to the attainment of liberty; and this is reason enough for sympathising in the attempts of Italians to re-constitute an Italy, and in those of the people of Posen to become a Poland.’<sup>64</sup> This was the argument Mill was to use in 1861, in *Considerations on Representative Government*, as *prima facie* telling in favour of granting each ‘nationality’ its own state, if and when possible. But he was then to go on and spend most of chapter 16 of that book explaining the reasons why that one-nation-one-state solution was not at all easy nor necessarily desirable. His doubts and concerns started very shortly after 1848, as we will see briefly in the [next section](#).

<sup>64</sup> Mill, ‘Vindication’, *CW*, XX, 347–48.

## V Aftermath

In this section I will focus briefly on the clear evidence that by 1851 the thinker who came closest to defending the principle had grown wary of ‘nationality’. In a passage more often quoted or referred to than properly analysed,<sup>65</sup> which occurs both in his essay ‘Coleridge’ (1840) and in his *System of Logic* (first published in 1843 – Book VI, chapter 10) Mill effected some revealing changes from the earlier to the later editions. To start with, while in the earliest versions (1840, 1843, and 1846) Mill specified as one of the three conditions of stability in political society ‘a strong and active principle of nationality’, in later editions of the text he changed that phrase into: ‘a strong and active principle of cohesion among the members of the same community or state’.<sup>66</sup> What is more, in the lines immediately following those just quoted, Mill also changed the original text, from: ‘We need scarcely say that we do not mean a senseless antipathy to foreigners ...’ into: ‘We need scarcely say that we do not mean *nationality in the vulgar sense of the term*; a senseless antipathy to foreigners ...’.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, in the later editions he also added, immediately following this, that he did not mean: ‘an indifference to the general welfare of the human race, or an unjust preference of the supposed interest of our own country’.<sup>68</sup> While in the early 1840s<sup>69</sup> Mill was proposing ‘a strong and active principle of nationality’ as one of the *sine qua non* of stability in political society, in later editions he did not name what he said was needed ‘nationality’, but rather ‘a strong and active principle of cohesion among the members of the same community or state’. And, even more revealingly, he then described all the deplorable manifestations of nationalist feeling that he went on to enumerate, as ‘nationality in the vulgar sense of the term’.<sup>70</sup> In other words, Mill was advocating a kind of attachment to one’s political community, which he defined carefully so as not to identify it with ‘nationality’. During the same year, we also find Mill in October 1851 being wary of using the word ‘patriotism’ because of its association with ‘narrowness’ and preferring ‘public spirit, and intelligent interest in public affairs’.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> J. Gray, *Berlin* (London: Fontana Press, 1995), p. 174 (n.3); M. Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), epigraph; R. Scruton, *England and the Need for Nations* (London: Civitas, 2004), pp. 4–5.

<sup>66</sup> Mill, *A System of Logic*, *CW*, X, 134–35. <sup>67</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>68</sup> Mill, *CW*, X, 135.

<sup>69</sup> In 1840 in the essay ‘Coleridge’ and then in the first (1843) and second (1846) editions of *A System of Logic*, to which he copied the relevant passage from ‘Coleridge’. The later editions, where the amended text appeared, are those of the years 1851, 1856, 1862, 1865, 1868, and 1872.

<sup>70</sup> Mill, *CW*, VIII, 923; and *CW*, X, 135–36.

<sup>71</sup> Mill, ‘Newman’s Political Economy’, *CW*, V, 457.

What is interesting for our purposes here is the double-edged way in which the aftermath of the Revolutions of 1848 affected Mill's thought on nationality. On the one hand, it made him disillusioned, disgusted, and suspicious of what we today would call the 'tribalism' displayed by most nationalist revolutionaries in Central and Eastern Europe and led to his comments about such feelings being characteristic of barbarians. On the other hand, though, it also informed his theory on the importance of separating such nationalities *wherever possible* and allowing each of them to have its own state, exactly in order to prevent a repetition of what he thought he saw happening in 1848. The Austrian government had been taking advantage of the prevalence of nationalist attachments and antipathies and playing national groups against each other, in his opinion.<sup>72</sup> That is why Mill, despite his deep disillusionment with, and deep suspicion of, 'nationality' after 1848–49, strongly indicated by what he wrote in 1849 and in 1851, went on arguing as late as 1861 (in *Considerations on Representative Government*) that, whenever possible, nationalities should have their own states. In other words, it was exactly because of his fear and disgust at the manifestations of 'nationality in the vulgar sense of the word', as he observed them in 1849–49, that he insisted on the theory of the pragmatic accommodation, wherever possible, of the claims of nationality: this accommodation could be pursued through the one-nation-one state model, as a way of creating what might be called 'sated' nations, where the national question would not be constantly hampering the constitutional development of the country and would not bedevil the proper functioning of a united public opinion, a common *agora*.

## VI Conclusion

What I have argued so far applies to *the principle* of nationality (or 'principle of nationalities', as those who, like Bagehot, followed French debates started calling it in the 1850s and 1860s), to the theory or doctrine. It by no means implies that Victorian men and women did not enthusiastically sympathise with particular 'nationalities', wishing their liberation at the expense of unpopular despotic or authoritarian empires such as the Habsburg, Russian, or Ottoman Empires. Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the Paris Revolution of February 1848, Marian Evans (better known as George Eliot) was far from alone in the sentiment

<sup>72</sup> Cf. W. Bagehot, 'The gains of the world by the two last wars in Europe' [*The Economist*], 18 August 1866, in *Works of Walter Bagehot*, Vol. VIII, 154–60, at 157. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: André Deutsch, 1986), p. 236.



she expressed in a letter: 'I should not be sorry to hear that the Italians had risen en masse and chased the odious Austrians out of beautiful Lombardy.' (But nor was she alone in fearing the consequences: 'But this they could hardly do without help and that involves another European war.')

<sup>73</sup> The support for particular national movements continued in the 1850s and 1860s. And Richard Cobden was right of course to talk of the existence of 'the party of the "nationalities"' in 1856, but he was even more right and accurate in referring to them more specifically as 'the phil-Hungarians, the Italian-liberation Society, etc.'<sup>74</sup>

On 1 April 1848 the *Economist* published (anonymously) a long article written by William Rathbone Greg entitled 'The Fermentation of Europe: Why we have no hopes for France. Why we have much hope for Italy and Germany. Why we have no fears for England.' In the part where he discussed the grounds for his hopes for Italy and Germany, his focus was all about constitutional improvements; no word was said about nationality or national unity.<sup>75</sup> When, three years later, Greg published an article assessing 'The Net Results of 1848 in Germany and Italy', his priorities had not changed. But now the nationalities question could not be ignored. It was now discussed, but mainly as a problem and a dangerous distraction from what mattered. Thus he spoke of the Hungarian rebellion that almost succeeded until it was suppressed by Russian intervention as a struggle of the people of Hungary for free institutions, but not as a national struggle.<sup>76</sup> And assessing the overall performance of the revolutionaries in the various German and Italian states, Greg opined: 'The second mistake . . . committed by the friends of freedom in 1848, was the mixing up of two objects, wholly distinct in themselves, and of which the desirableness was by no means equally clear – constitutional right and national unity.' Greg thought that the revolutionaries in Italy and Germany should have concentrated their efforts on 'the attainment of free institutions for each separate state', instead of complicating their cause, and distracting and weakening their party, 'by raising the standard of freedom and that of unity at the same time'.

<sup>73</sup> 'Marian Evans to John Sibree, Jr.', 8 March 1848, in G. S. Haight (ed.) *The George Eliot Letters* (Yale University Press, 1954), vol. II, pp. 254–55.

<sup>74</sup> Letter of 7 November 1856, in J. A. Hobson, *Richard Cobden: The International Man* (London: Ernest Benn, 1968 [1919]), pp. 177–78.

<sup>75</sup> *The Economist*, 1 April 1848, pp. 365–68. Cf. R. Dudley Edwards, *The Pursuit of Reason: The Economist 1843–1993* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1993), pp. 161–62.

<sup>76</sup> [W.R. Greg] 'Net Results of 1848 in Germany and Italy' (1851), in W. R. Greg, *Essays on Political and Social Science Contributed Chiefly to the Edinburgh Review*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853), vol. II, pp. 113–56, at p. 140.

More generally, very few people, if any, were, in 1848, as exuberant about 'the principle of nationality' as Bryce (who was ten years old in 1848) would have us believe. Bryce himself did become an enthusiast about particular national claims in the 1850s in Oxford. And many of the university liberals shared his enthusiasm.<sup>77</sup> But support for Italian national unity (or Hungarian freedom or the cause of the Armenians) does not prove a unanimous subscription to 'the principle of nationalities' – any more than philhellenic agitation in the 1820s meant that the claims of 'nationality' were accepted and propagated by British liberals of the time. Rather, for British liberal thinkers, some nationalities were 'more nationalities than others', as it were. Thus there was certainly some truth in what Lewis Namier wrote about English reactions to 1848 almost a century later. According to Namier, Englishmen 'also sympathised with national aspirations, if respectable and "legitimate"'. Here is how Namier defined 'legitimate' in a footnote: 'That is, of nations whose representatives were fit to frequent London society, or whose countries were attractive to British tourists.'<sup>78</sup>

But though he had a point, Namier was slightly cynical in the criteria he identified. It was not just a matter of refugees frequenting London salons (or pubs) and the preferences of British tourists (though there was overlap). There was a criterion, no matter how vague. Some national groups were seen as more legitimately claiming the status of 'nationalities' than others, depending on whether they could convincingly claim to be 'great nations', according to various historical and cultural criteria of 'greatness', as well as, not least, a certain minimum scale in terms of population. The criteria were never completely clear, and the scope for applying one's prejudices and predilections was ample.<sup>79</sup> But what Lamartine was reported to have told Lord Normanby is relevant here: 'Autant les nationalités d'*Alsace* ou de *Bourgogne*!' And the main complaint of Nassau Senior against the 'barbarous feeling of nationality' was its conduciveness to breaking up larger units into smaller states, or 'hostile fragments'.<sup>80</sup> Examples of such concerns emerged quite early on in 1848. It is characteristic how, in April 1848, an article in the *Examiner* commented on the disastrous 'attempt at a nationality' of the inhabitants of Schleswig. The Schleswigers would be 'halved and sliced, sacrificed

<sup>77</sup> Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 100.

<sup>78</sup> L. Namier, 1848: *The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 32.

<sup>79</sup> For an analysis focusing on later decades see G. Varouxakis, "'Great" versus "small" nations: size and national greatness in Victorian political thought' in D. Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 136–58.

<sup>80</sup> Senior, *Journals*, p. 262 (see *supra*, section III).

and bamboozled' after the recent developments, the article assessed. But that was inevitable: 'Nor can we say but that they richly deserve it, by their foolish attempt at a nationality which their small population could not pretend to, and at a resistance and independence which small countries under the shade of great ones can never attain, however their unquiet spirits may strive for it through centuries of blood.'<sup>81</sup> The logic was the same as Lamartine's and Senior's. This idea of a certain threshold of size or scale being indispensable for the viability of a 'nationality' and therefore for any claims to legitimate 'nationality' status was to be developed in the following two decades. Matthew Arnold was strikingly explicit in *England and the Italian Question* in 1859.<sup>82</sup> And so was Walter Bagehot a few years later: 'The principle of nationalities, as a principle, and if it is to be pushed out in logic, cannot claim the support of history; . . . we must be prepared for its having many erroneous accompaniments and vicious accidents, and for the necessity of a little care in winnowing the useful wheat from the useless chaff.' According to Bagehot, 'The interest of the world is that it should be composed of *great nations*, not necessarily great in territory, but great in merit, great in their connecting spirit, great in their political qualities, vigorous while living, famous when dead.'<sup>83</sup>

As Bagehot put it a couple of years later in another article: 'Much nonsense is talked as to the principle of nationalities, as about all approximate practical precepts which claim to be first philosophical principles.'<sup>84</sup> That was how most liberal thinkers viewed 'the principle'. It was not an absolute principle and they were ambivalent about it and its implications. This article has tried to show that the ambivalence was there already in 1848, and that the impact of 1848 was to increase British liberals' misgivings about the merits of 'the principle of nationality', when asserted as a 'first philosophical [principle]'. It was no more than an 'approximate practical [precept]'. As Lord Acton came to say in a letter to Gladstone many years after he had written his famous essay on the subject: 'Nationality has to be dealt with discriminatingly. It is not always liberal or constructive. It may be as dangerous when its boundary is outside that of the State as salutary when inside.'<sup>85</sup> The whole discussion had come full circle somehow by then. Acton had come to accept that

<sup>81</sup> 'Schleswig-Holstein', *Examiner*, 22 April 1848.

<sup>82</sup> Varouxakis, "'Great" versus "small" nations', 141–44.

<sup>83</sup> Emphasis in original, W. Bagehot, 'The Meaning and the Value of the Limits of the Principle of Nationalities' [*The Economist*, 18 June 1864], in *Works of Walter Bagehot*, Vol. VIII, 149–53, at 149–50.

<sup>84</sup> Bagehot, 'The Gains of the World', 157.

<sup>85</sup> 'Acton to Gladstone', 18 February 1888, in J. N. Figgis and R. V. Laurence (eds.) *Selections from the Correspondence of the First Lord Acton* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), vol. I, p. 182.

Mill had been right in arguing (in 1861) that, whenever possible, nations and states might be encouraged to coincide, as that would be more conducive to the functioning of representative government.<sup>86</sup> But Mill and Bagehot and Arnold and most other liberals had also all along agreed with what the later Acton came to say, that nationality has to be dealt with discriminatingly. Liberal political thinkers were ambivalent about 'nationality' and that was clear very shortly after the revolutions of 1848 had brought home to them its implications.

<sup>86</sup> G. E. Fasnacht, *Acton's Political Philosophy: An Analysis* (London: Hollin and Careter, 1952), p. 131.

## 7 Christian Socialism, Class Collaboration, and British Public Life after 1848<sup>1</sup>

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*Jonathan Parry*

It is often assumed that 1848 had little effect on British political culture except to enhance complacency about the nation's political stability and economic strength relative to other European countries. This was certainly its major impact on British politics itself. Initial debate about further parliamentary reform petered out. The continental turmoil encouraged pressure for economic reform, but the beneficiaries were free trade, Peelite finance, and ratepayer parsimony, already dominant since 1841. The 'shake' that the foreign revolutions provided prompted the Northcote-Trevelyan inquiry into civil service efficiency, but this bore little fruit until 1870.<sup>2</sup> Westminster politics had a superficially anti-aristocratic makeover: country-gentry Protectionist Toryism and family Whiggism both lost their remaining credibility as political movements, but the upshot of the demand for a more inclusive, cross-class, and anti-factional politics was the triumph of Palmerston, who held government together for a decade from his great Hampshire estate. By the time the Great Exhibition of 1851 opened, the national mood was celebratory of British stability and prosperity: Macaulay claimed that there was as much chance of a revolution as of 'the falling of the moon'.<sup>3</sup>

Not everyone was so complacent, however, and many writers criticised prevailing social failings. This essay examines one of the most important of these criticisms: a demand that the propertied classes should take more account of the working-class aspirations behind Chartism. There was much more concern that leaders should engage seriously with working-class lives than there had been in the crisis of 1829–32, and this had a permanent effect. This was largely because 1848 was not seen as a lone event: many writers had already developed their analysis of social

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Michael Ledger-Lomas for valuable comments on a draft of this article, and Boyd Hilton for many earlier discussions on these themes.

<sup>2</sup> *Second report of the Civil Service Inquiry Commission; with Appendix*, P.P. 1875, xxiii, 451, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> G. O. Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), vol. II, p. 226.

problems earlier in the 1840s in response to economic depression, the first Chartist petitions, and the reports and novels discussing popular living and working conditions. Though it was widely held through the 1850s that Britain was a relatively harmonious political community, there was also a continuing undercurrent of social concern.<sup>4</sup>

This essay focuses particularly on the critics who formed the Christian socialist circle around the theologian Frederick Maurice. There has been a great deal of writing about the long-term implications of Christian socialism on theology and on twentieth-century social thought, but here I argue that its effect on politics and public culture in the shorter term was also significant. One important impact was the movement's self-conscious emphasis on a clerisy to take the lead in class collaboration. In other words, Maurice and friends were largely preoccupied with moralising future generations of national and local leaders and teaching them their social duty. Moreover, some propertied members of this clerisy went into politics, and this chapter goes on to trace the impact of a number of Christian socialist sympathisers in parliament, whose influence was particularly effective immediately after the Second Reform Act of 1867. It is striking how much of the attempt of Gladstone's government of 1868–74 to reach out to an enlarged working-class electorate was driven by the assumptions and priorities of these men. Their well-intentioned but limited reading of popular concerns goes a long way towards explaining the failures as well as the successes of Liberal politics at this time.

## I

The movement that we know as Christian socialism began in direct reaction to the Chartist demonstration at Kennington Common on 10 April 1848. Within days, the group at its core had decided to bring out publications to meet the crisis of the day, and the periodical *Politics for the People* was published between May and July 1848. Another serial, *The Christian Socialist*, appeared for most of 1851. The head of the group was the Anglican clergyman and London professor Frederick Denison Maurice, whose writings and sermons had been winning adherents for several years. Charles Kingsley, rector of Eversley, was one; the barrister John Malcolm Ludlow, who knew Maurice as chaplain of Lincoln's Inn, was another. These three were supported by Kingsley's friend the chemist Charles Mansfield, and the lapsed Calvinist Alexander Scott. Maurice's brother-in-law Archdeacon Julius Hare provided the group with senior

<sup>4</sup> See J. Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 98–100.

guidance, while many young men were attracted to it in the course of 1848–49, such as Ludlow's fellow barrister Thomas Hughes, who brought his friend Lord Goderich and various former school friends from Thomas Arnold's Rugby.

Historically, most writing about Christian socialism has focused on its impact on twentieth-century Christian thinking on social problems, or the extent to which these early writers were influenced by socialist ideas.<sup>5</sup> It is now fully accepted that hardly any of them knew about or were interested in French socialist thought.<sup>6</sup> The exception, Ludlow, who had been largely educated in France, led the initiative for workers' producer co-operatives, stimulated by the *associations ouvrières* set up in Paris under the provisional government of 1848. In the 1850s, Christian socialists were responsible for establishing several such co-operatives, beginning with the Working Tailors' Association. However, their organisation became a bone of contention between their major financial backer, Edward Neale (another Lincoln's Inn barrister), and other supporters, while there was a failure of understanding with the existing retail co-operatives in the north of England.<sup>7</sup> Most of them collapsed or lost their purpose by the end of the decade. They were never the centre of Maurice's or Kingsley's interest.

The difficulty of writing about Christian socialism is that it was not a coherent movement. It proceeded in fits and starts between 1848 and 1854, in response to new external influences.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, when Ludlow led the turn to practical co-operative ventures and used the *Christian Socialist* to advocate these and other political reforms, Maurice and Kingsley took issue with his radicalism; the resulting tensions are well known.<sup>9</sup> The aim here is to focus on the thought of Maurice and Kingsley, particularly their arguments about class collaboration and their impact on young university men.

Maurice and Kingsley argued that Chartism was an understandable but flawed response by the working classes to their social conditions and the prevailing political discourse. Their demand for parliamentary reform

<sup>5</sup> See J. C. Cort, *Christian Socialism: An Informal History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), and A. Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism: Scott Holland to Tony Blair* (London: SCM, 1998). On the twentieth century, see M. Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> The best discussions are T. Christensen, *Origin and History of Christian Socialism 1848–54* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1962) and E. Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> See P. N. Backstrom, *Christian Socialism and Co-operation in Victorian England: Edward Vansittart Neale and the Co-operative Movement* (London: Croom Helm, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> See *Ibid.*, and Christensen, *Christian Socialism*, pp. 109–20.

<sup>9</sup> For Ludlow's arguments, see *Ibid.*, pp. 153–61.



and for attention to working-class concerns was a result of the bitter class divisions of the 1840s which had also produced the Anti-Corn Law League and the ensuing protectionist backlash. Workers saw the selfish middle and upper classes each organise themselves for their own material benefit. Politics had become a battle of greedy sections and unpleasant ideologies. It was better that a Chartist should seek to regenerate through common action the men among whom he worked and lived than to 'desert his own class' and become 'a Mammonite' as the self-help economists demanded.<sup>10</sup> *Laissez-faire* zealots argued that 'land, goods, money, labour [are] the basis of society' instead of 'human relations'.<sup>11</sup> The Manchester School had distorted political economy into a simplistic and crude mantra about competition, which treated men as machines, stripping them of their humanity. The result was ever higher profits but an 'ever widening pit of pauperism and slavery' with no possibility of remedy.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Benthamism was a dry materialist philosophy based on a spiritually meaningless view of happiness, while Malthusianism would deprive working men of the family ties that gave hope and purpose to much of their work and energy.<sup>13</sup> Maurice and Kingsley did not reject political economy or statistical science, but argued that they offered merely partial answers and should not be elevated into dogma. Society and politics should be based on common interests, not class conflict. But this also meant that Chartist disorder was mistaken, as was the worship of self, which was derived from French and German habits.<sup>14</sup> Though many working men were thoughtful enough to deserve the vote, universal suffrage could not be granted so long as it was demanded by physical force, threats of revenge on the propertied, and alliance with United Irishmen; it would only serve to increase the amount of class division in politics.<sup>15</sup>

Individually, none of these attitudes was original by the late 1840s. They were heavily influenced by organicist German thought as mediated particularly through Carlyle (in Kingsley's case) and Coleridge (in Maurice's). Carlyle had been a luminous anti-materialist prophet since

<sup>10</sup> C. Kingsley, *Alton Locke Tailor and Poet: An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> F. Maurice, *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice Chiefly Told in His Own Letters*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1884), vol. II, p. 114.

<sup>12</sup> F. E. Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, 2 vols. (C. Kegan Paul, 1877), vol. I, pp. 313–15; Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, p. 195.

<sup>13</sup> F. D. Maurice, *The Reformation of Society, and How All Classes May Contribute to It* (Southampton: Forbes & Knibb, 1851), pp. 22–23.

<sup>14</sup> Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, pp. 300, 328; for socialism as the 'deification of selfishness', see A. F. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1896), vol. I, pp. 132–44.

<sup>15</sup> A. Helps, *Politics for the People* (New York, 1971), pp. 28–32.

the end of the 1830s, and several young Christian socialists, such as Fenton Hort and John Llewelyn Davies, came to the group through a pre-existing admiration for him. Moreover, though neither Kingsley nor Maurice saw themselves as party Tories, they were trying to find what many conservatives were also seeking: a more defensible platform for the traditional alliance of Anglicanism and property in the aftermath of 1832 and 1846.

What made Christian socialism striking and original was the way in which it bound the political up in the religious. At its heart was Maurice's theology, which stressed that the reward of God's love was not restricted to a future life; rather, 'a Living and Righteous God is ruling in human society' and already present in all men.<sup>16</sup> Man's duty was to realise that Kingdom of Christ here on earth, which meant not just a personal relationship with God but an organic social relationship with the other men made in God's image, a unity of mankind.<sup>17</sup> In theological controversy, the enemy was the same as in political debate: dogmatic, sectarian, divisive approaches, in this case evangelicalism and the Oxford Movement, both doggedly embracing a Manichean-inspired exclusiveness instead of the proper religious spirit of universality. Evangelicals sought to organise religion around sharp distinctions between the saved and the damned, which offered a false and alienating vision of God's priorities for mankind in this life. Tractarianism insisted on subscription to ancient historical dogmas and quaint medieval affectations based on dry formulae that obscured God's underlying love for man: it was 'aristocratic', 'elegant' but 'carnal'.<sup>18</sup> The quarrels of the 1840s between these two false world-views were as destructive of social peace as the battles of class, both in themselves and because they made so many people reject religion in disgust. Sectarianism in theology and in politics was destroying the nation.

However, since God was already immanent in all humanity, it was not utopian to hope for social reformation, as long as churchmen showed the way. Evangelicalism had to be purged of the Calvinist remnants that Kingsley satirised brutally in *Alton Locke*. The Oxford Movement needed to humanise its own priests before they would be widely accepted as leaders of society. This required among other things an acceptance of

<sup>16</sup> 'Prospectus', *Ibid.*, p. 1. On Maurice's theology see D. Young, *F.D. Maurice and Unitarianism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), and J. Morris, *F.D. Maurice and the Crisis of Christian Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For an important discussion of his theological impact, see B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795–1865* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), ch. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Maurice, *Maurice*, vol. II, p. 632, vol. I, p. 459. <sup>18</sup> Kingsley, *Kingsley*, vol. I, p. 250.

marriage and family life instead of the selfish fad of clerical celibacy, since God revealed himself to man largely through the mutual obligation and support engendered in the home. Godly love had a bodily and a spiritual dimension. More generally, ordinary men would respond only to an idea of God defined in terms of their actual life, their 'poor, simple, struggling, earth-bound soul'. Working men, 'whose craving is only for some idea which shall give equal hopes, claims, and deliverances, to all mankind alike', would not appreciate a religion designed to appeal just to frivolous ladies and cloistered intellectuals, let alone one that taught that most men were 'damned to all eternity, simply for being born'.<sup>19</sup>

Working men also cried out for 'the feeling of an order in God's government, in their relations to each other ... a righteous order'.<sup>20</sup> Government and authority were essential in order to restrain a potential popular despotism. The propertied classes were the natural rulers of society, though aristocrats were too often 'idle, worthless, helpless loungers' and needed Christianising too. Religion's task was thus to instil a 'larger and wider sympathy in civil governors'.<sup>21</sup> Maurice and Kingsley believed that the church could bring out the Christian spirit in all men without the need to transform existing structures, ranks, and orders.<sup>22</sup> 'Socialism' meant not the defeat of capitalism or redistribution of property, but social fellowship within a Christian schema. Maurice defined Christian socialism in terms of its opposites, the 'unsocial Christians and the unchristian Socialists'.<sup>23</sup> Through such fellowship came the understanding of the potential of man – true manliness, the manliness that Christ had embodied. Social fellowship *within* classes was currently necessary to protect men against devilish ideas of competition, but an organic community demanded full fellowship *between* the classes as well. Only social and spiritual leaders could make that alliance of classes a reality.

The church was in principle the body most suited to teach and bear witness to God's love of man; it was 'the hallow of all professions and occupations, the bond of all classes, the instrument of reforming abuses'.<sup>24</sup> But its weaknesses were striking, and a crucial element of Maurice's vision of the spreading of righteous principles was the Coleridgean idea of a broader clerisy expanding the church's traditional

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 187–90, 255–56; Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in J. F. C. Harrison, *A History of the Working Men's College 1854–1954* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Maurice, *Reformation of Society*, p. 18; F. D. Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer: Nine Sermons* (London: J.W. Parker, 1848), p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> For Ludlow on this, see Christensen, *Christian Socialism*, p. 95.

<sup>23</sup> Maurice, *Maurice*, vol. II, p. 35. <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 269, 227–28.

role. In 1855 he emphasised the importance of a group of professions – clergymen, but also physicians, teachers, lawyers, and artists – whose concern was ‘not with things which can be weighed or measured, but with health of mind and health of body, with truth, with justice, with beauty, with things which cannot be gotten for gold’.<sup>25</sup> The professional class, in other words, had a duty to teach men how to live, how to discover their true manliness, rather than how to earn money as the commercial class did. As chaplain to Lincoln’s Inn from 1846 to 1860, Maurice was used to teaching these professionals their duty. Unfortunately, they, like everyone else, had been corrupted by the prevailing materialism, and behaved like tradesmen, concerned with what ‘will pay’. Meanwhile the universities, the cradle of the professions, were incapable of supplying spiritual leadership either. Dons had lost their ‘personal influence’; undergraduates were in the grip of, variously, ‘animal enjoyment’, religious bigotry, and money worship. Maurice noted in 1850 that ‘all is stagnant and dead’ in Oxford.<sup>26</sup>

The single most important insight of the Christian socialists came from this diagnosis. If the working man was to be improved, there needed to be a proper clerisy, but the clerisy was itself in need of moral reformation. These two problems had the same solution. Young professional men, and the undergraduates who would turn into them, could realise their true function only if they engaged regularly with working men. Class collaboration would help both sides to realise the idea of Christian manliness in themselves and each other: ‘The working classes exist to assert the dignity of man, and to be witnesses against that glorification of *things* which has destroyed the other two.’<sup>27</sup> As Maurice explained to working men in 1855, ‘you . . . can give us back far more . . . by making us realise the value of our own possessions . . . If we succeed in helping you, we succeed in maintaining our own position and dignity’ and ‘fulfil our own duties.’<sup>28</sup>

It is easy to forget the controversy that the Christian socialists caused simply by preaching and talking so frequently to working-class audiences. During 1849 Maurice attended a series of conferences with 100–200 working men at the Cranbourne Coffee Tavern, and in 1850 he became president of the Society for Promoting Working Men’s Associations, at

<sup>25</sup> F. D. Maurice, *Administrative Reform, and Its Connexion with Working Men’s Colleges: An Address* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1855), pp. 8–9, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, pp. 136, 155, 221–2; Maurice, *Administrative Reform*, p. 10; F. D. Maurice, *Learning and Working: Six Lectures* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1855), p. xviii; Hort, *Hort*, vol. I, p. 159.

<sup>27</sup> Maurice, *Maurice*, vol. II, p. 115.

<sup>28</sup> Maurice, *Administrative Reform*, pp. 11–12, 15.

much the same time as Kingsley produced his excoriating pamphlet on the sweated trades. Kingsley was much criticised for excitedly declaring himself a Chartist at a tavern meeting in 1848. Then J. W. Croker in the *Quarterly Review* in 1851 accused Maurice and Kingsley of 'Chartist Socialism' and a 'perversion of Christianity', badly damaging Maurice's reputation among his employers at the Anglican stronghold of King's College London.<sup>29</sup> When Kingsley preached to working-men visitors to the Great Exhibition in 1851 urging 'equality and brotherhood' in God, the outcry led the bishop of London to forbid him access to pulpits in the capital.<sup>30</sup> It was Maurice's bible classes for working men that gave him many of his insights into what they wanted from the church.<sup>31</sup> These tensions over how to present Christianity to them then led to Maurice's expulsion from his professorship at King's in 1853, after he published his criticisms of traditional Anglican teaching on eternal punishment, which he thought gave the devil too large a place in the universe. The living and holy God should be the central idea of theology; sin was 'the departure from the state of union with Him, into which He has brought us'. Eternal punishment should not be viewed as a temporally endless imprisonment in Hell. It was 'loss of God's presence . . . separation from love, abandonment to self', and this could be restored. The great flaw in traditional teaching was that it failed to communicate to working men how they could free themselves from 'inward misery' and receive God's love in *this* world. In fact it encouraged them to persevere in worldly evil, because it reduced the chance of divine punishment to a mere matter of odds after death, something that a working-class gambler was likely to find attractive.<sup>32</sup> The Council of King's condemned Maurice's arguments, but as he refused to resign they had to sack him, and the affair received enormous publicity. Each side thought that their approach was the only way to make religious teaching to working men effective, at a time when anxiety about social order was still substantial. Goderich anticipated that the King's affair would bring on 'a great struggle for the living faith against . . . shams and formulas'. One Cambridge don thought that only Maurice could 'stem the tide of infidelity'.<sup>33</sup> In December 1853, 953 working men signed a petition to him defending his teaching and lamenting the damage to faith done by his clerical opponents.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Kingsley, *Kingsley*, vol. I, p. 166; 'Revolutionary literature' in *Quarterly Review*, 89 (Sept. 1851), 524–36.

<sup>30</sup> Kingsley, *Kingsley*, vol. I, pp. 289–91. <sup>31</sup> Maurice, *Maurice*, vol. II, pp. 236.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 450, vol. II, pp. 15–17; F.D. Maurice, *The word 'Eternal', and the Punishment of the Wicked: A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Jelf* (London: Macmillan, 1854), pp. 11, 15, 26–27.

<sup>33</sup> L. Wolf, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, 2 vols. (J. Murray, 1921), vol. I, pp. 164–65; C. Morgan, *The House of Macmillan* (London: Macmillan, 1943), p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice, *Maurice*, vol. II, pp. 221–23.

The response of Maurice and friends to the King's crisis – and to the broader need for a socially active clerisy – was the establishment in 1854 of the Working Men's College in London. The idea was proposed at the December 1853 meeting. It was intended to be a model for adult education but also to show how a college could unite the classes in an industrial city: Maurice claimed that it was 'another opening for the assertion of the principle of Co-operation'. He tellingly wrote that the college was established 'first for the benefit of us the teachers, secondly for the benefit of those whom we taught'.<sup>35</sup> The word 'college' invoked the idea of fellowship, as in Cambridge, and of a common political citizenship.<sup>36</sup> The plan was to attract recent graduates from Cambridge or current undergraduates as volunteer teachers of working men. One of them, Frederick Furnivall, reminisced of his classes: 'we studied and took exercise together, we were comrades and friends, and helpt [*sic*] one another to live higher, happier, and healthier lives, free from all stupid and narrow class humbug'.<sup>37</sup> The aim was not to supply a utilitarian training for a commercial life, as the Benthamite Mechanics' Institutes had tended to do, and therefore the teaching model was not didactic lecturing but class discussion. The goal was, rather, human understanding and 'genuine self-education' through the study of a broad liberal curriculum including maths, English grammar, languages, drawing, humanities, and physical sciences.<sup>38</sup> Over time all-inclusive college clubs also developed, for such purposes as rowing, swimming, and singing, as well as an active volunteer corps from 1859. Cambridge teachers in the early years included the rising broad churchmen John Llewelyn Davies and F. W. Farrar. The link with Cambridge lasted for decades: thirty-nine young graduates had taught there by 1873, and by the time of the fiftieth anniversary in 1904, there was still an annual supply of volunteer recruits.<sup>39</sup>

This active engagement by young idealists in the lives of working men was a fundamental appeal of college teaching, just as it was central to the impulse behind the Christian socialists' original co-operatives.<sup>40</sup> For the same reason, Maurice's followers soon set up local colleges in a significant number of other towns (a development which has never been properly studied). In 1855 Henry Montagu Butler, Fenton Hort, and some other

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p.275; Harrison, *Working Men's College*, pp.15, 29.

<sup>36</sup> J. Westlake, in J. Llewelyn Davies (ed.) *The Working Men's College 1854–1904* (London: Macmillan, 1904), p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60. <sup>38</sup> See Hort, *Hort*, vol. I, p. 317.

<sup>39</sup> Harrison, *Working Men's College*, p. 46; G. M. Trevelyan in Davies, *Working Men's College*, p. 189.

<sup>40</sup> See Morris, *F.D. Maurice*, pp.150–53.

young Cambridge dons established a similar Working Men's College in Cambridge itself, while David Vaughan, who as a Fellow of Trinity had produced a translation of Plato's *Republic* with Davies in 1852, founded a very successful college in Leicester when he took up a clerical appointment there. Maurice's friend Alexander Scott, who had become founding Principal of Owens' College Manchester in 1850, established the Manchester Working Men's College in 1858. Henry Solly, a Unitarian admirer of Maurice and temperance activist, set up an improvement and recreation society for working men in Lancaster on similar principles but incorporating more social activities, in the belief that this was necessary to wean them from pubs.<sup>41</sup> As Hort wrote: 'even if the educational results are poor, it is a vast gain to both sides that the University men and any kind of working men should be brought into that kind of intercourse'.<sup>42</sup>

Two of the keenest initial advocates of the Cambridge Working Men's College were members of a self-consciously Maurician clerisy in another sense as well. Brothers Daniel and Alexander Macmillan had set up as booksellers on the prime site of 1 Trinity Street Cambridge, opposite the Senate House and Great St Mary's, in 1845, expanding from their previous shop. The elder brother, Daniel, had an elevated (though not uncommercial) notion of the role of books in a nation's life, which drove him, despite chronic ill-health, from a desperately poor rural Scottish upbringing to found one of the major British publishing houses. His encounter with Carlyle's works in the late 1830s helped him to slough off his Calvinistic upbringing, which had sought to persuade him that his poverty and tuberculosis were to be meekly accepted as 'the chastening of the Lord'.<sup>43</sup> Exposure to Hare's and then Maurice's writings led him from Baptist Dissent into the Church of England in 1842, and he used his shop (acquired with the help of a loan from Hare) to publicise their and similar works. The role of the bookseller, he wrote, was to help 'young men ... in the formation of opinions on morality and religion', thereby 'aiding our great Taskmaster to reduce the world into order, and beauty, and harmony ... We are His ministers'.<sup>44</sup> Daniel's background predisposed him to the idea of disseminating religious publications to a wide but intellectually curious audience to spread spiritual enlightenment and to lessen misunderstandings between rich and poor; he repeatedly urged such plans on Maurice, Hare, and Alexander Scott.<sup>45</sup> Soon he began publishing himself, including Maurice's works, and though these sold

<sup>41</sup> H. Solly, *These Eighty Years', or the Story of an Unfinished Life*, 2 vols. (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1893), vol. II, pp. 160–66.

<sup>42</sup> Hort, *Hort*, vol. I, p. 315.

<sup>43</sup> T. Hughes, *Memoir of Daniel Macmillan* (London: Macmillan, 1882), p. 241.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 118. <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 129, 165.



modestly they gave him access to Kingsley's later novels, such as *Westward Ho!* and *The Water Babies*, and to Thomas Hughes, whose *Tom Brown's School Days* became a runaway success for his firm in 1857. 1 Trinity St under the Macmillans became a forum for the exchange of ideas, particularly among those university men tired of the rigidities of Evangelicalism and Tractarianism. Dons and earnest undergraduates would mingle in the upper room to discuss the latest pamphlets, including *Politics for the People* and the *Christian Socialist*. This became an excellent business strategy for the brothers, since after such men left Cambridge for London or the provinces they tended to turn to the Macmillans if they had work to publish. By this means the infant publishing house became the firm of choice for young Cambridge intellectuals and educators, the influential headmaster Edward Thring being an early example. After Daniel's death, Macmillan & Co. opened a London branch in order better to promote such work, and themselves, to a national audience. Alexander also established *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1859 as a non-party, philosophical monthly periodical vehicle for plain-speaking signed articles on religious, political, and literary subjects, costing only a shilling.<sup>46</sup>

By the mid-1850s there was no doubt of the popularity of Maurice and his followers among Cambridge undergraduates who were looking for spiritual and social fulfilment. When he came to inspect the city's new Working Men's College in late 1855 he preached to 'a quite overwhelming congregation'; the galleries of Great St Mary's had to be opened for the first evening in years.<sup>47</sup> In 1866 he accepted a chair there, and lectured and gave sermons assiduously until his death in 1872. Kingsley became Regius Professor of History in 1860, enjoying an enthusiastic reception from undergraduates at his inaugural lecture, in which he attacked the tendency to view human history in terms of mechanical laws rather than moral ones such as the operation of 'common justice . . . between man and man'.<sup>48</sup> In 1869 he was succeeded by J. R. Seeley, who had also taught at the London Working Men's College, and who envisaged the clergy using history, social science, and other new knowledge as the basis of moral teaching to the whole nation.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See G. J. Worth, *Macmillan's Magazine 1859–1907: 'No Flippancy or Abuse Allowed'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>47</sup> Maurice, *Maurice*, vol. II, p. 275; Hort, *Hort*, vol. I, p. 317.

<sup>48</sup> C. Kingsley, *The Limits of Exact Science as Applied to History* (Cambridge: Macmillan & Co, 1860), pp. 8–9, 53–5; Kingsley, *Kingsley*, vol. II, pp. 115, 119.

<sup>49</sup> See J. R. Seeley, 'The Church as a teacher of morality' in W. L. Clay (ed.), *Essays on Church Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1868), pp. 247–91.

Christian socialism came to affect the social conscience of many young university students and indeed schoolboys. In 1850 Kingsley was gratified to hear that his pamphlet *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, which urged a boycott of tailors who used sweated labour, was 'selling well at Eton'.<sup>50</sup> Even counting only those who were immediate members of the Cambridge circles discussed here, we find three men who became influential Victorian public school headmasters: Butler at Harrow, Thring at Uppingham, and Farrar at Marlborough. Farrar's influence was much enhanced by his school stories and his popularising of Maurician incarnational theology, placing great emphasis on the moral example of Christ's earthly life for the modern believer.<sup>51</sup> The wider diffusion of Maurice's influence is more difficult to trace because there were many points of overlap with the message of Thomas Arnold – indeed, they were intermingled when served to an immense audience in Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days*. Its sequel, *Tom Brown at Oxford* (the first book serialised in *Macmillan's Magazine*), preached more overtly the need for the young to forsake the example of the idle rich and to embrace the gospel of social fellowship across the classes. By the 1870s, the public school, university, and clerical worlds were touched at many points by the combined legacies of Arnold and Maurice.

## II

We can assume, therefore, that Christian socialism also had some influence on the propertied political elite, to which we now turn. Inevitable interplay with other ideas makes this influence difficult to assess precisely, but two approaches will be used here. The first is relatively simple: to consider sanitary reform, the political issue that Kingsley, in particular, was determined to publicise. Kingsley was convinced that politicians had some responsibility for dealing with the issue, though so did the individual citizen also. The principle of *laissez-faire* was his great bugbear, but he meant by this universal complacency and selfishness rather than just a denial of the state's duty. Passivity in the face of social problems was a sin that was shared between the Manchester School, mean-minded ratepayers, those uncurious about science, and Calvinists who acquiesced in disease and pain as the chastening of God. It was this collective laziness, ignorance, and greed that were responsible for cholera epidemics, just as for sweated labour. It was a Christian's duty to improve the

<sup>50</sup> Kingsley, *Kingsley*, vol. I, p. 240.

<sup>51</sup> See especially his *The Life of Christ*, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Scott, 1874), and the discussion of this in Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp. 274–76.

physical and intellectual condition of God's creatures, by state action where relevant but also by philanthropy and by relentless publicity for water and air purity, habitable dwellings, and other scientific improvements.<sup>52</sup> This was a battle to alter the intellectual climate: as Kingsley himself noted, men's hearts cannot be 'changed by act of parliament'.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless his publicity could be very effective at Westminster: the Chimney Sweepers' Regulation Act of 1864 was passed within a year of the publication of *The Water Babies*. Kingsley drummed home to younger men thinking of entering the church that improvement of social conditions was an essential Christian task because it was not possible to expect high standards of morality from the very poor: drink was an understandable refuge for them.<sup>54</sup> Another sanitary reformer in the Christian socialist circle was Arthur Helps, a disciple of Carlyle and Maurice who wrote for *Politics for the People* and urged employers to develop a sense of duty to workers; he criticised London sewerage policy and urged the formation of a health fund to meet the cholera threat in 1854. Kingsley and Helps were both allies of John Simon, who, as a medical officer of health for the City of London sewers commission from 1848, wrote well-publicised annual reports fiercely criticising sanitary shortcomings in the capital, and then as chief medical officer for the government from 1855 – appointed by William Cowper-Temple, then president of the Board of Health – did more than anyone to urge better disease prevention policy on local authorities. Cowper-Temple (the stepson of then prime minister Palmerston) was not only an admirer of Maurice's teaching but also a politically well-connected contact for young Christian Socialists: he made Butler his political secretary and gave Davies a clerical living in London.

Those sanitary reformers were of Kingsley's generation. The second, more substantial aim of this section is to examine a coherent group of younger politicians with links to Christian socialism. Anxious about the class tensions of the 1840s, they sought to make the working man feel part of the political order, but through means going beyond the mechanical strategy of parliamentary reform (which was the default cry of many urban radical MPs). Some of the older ones had been touched by Carlyle's writings, while the two youngest – Goderich and Hughes – were overt Christian socialists, and it was Goderich who gave the group its identity.

Goderich was the son of a prime minister; indeed, he was born in Downing Street in 1827. He became Earl de Grey and Ripon in 1859

<sup>52</sup> Kingsley, *Kingsley*, vol. I, pp. 414, 416, 423. <sup>53</sup> *Politics for the People*, p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> Hughes, *Daniel Macmillan*, p. 245.

and then Marquess of Ripon in 1871, and will be called Goderich or Ripon in this chapter. He became a government minister in 1859 and was a member of every Liberal cabinet from 1863 until 1908 except when Viceroy of India in the 1880s. Through his friend Thomas Hughes he had discovered the Maurice circle in 1848. In 1852, just before his first election to parliament, his tract 'The Duty of the Age' attacked the class system as exclusive and divisive and advocated democracy on grounds of Christian fraternity. However, it recognised that the working man must learn to exercise the vote in a spirit of 'brotherhood' and self-sacrifice rather than Chartist class selfishness, and urged a proper education system and improved social conditions in order to civilise him, as well as co-operation and industrial arbitration. In 1853, contesting Huddersfield, he advocated measures for working-class education in order to 'entitle them step by step to take part wisely and intelligently in the affairs of their country'. His first campaign as an MP was to popularise the idea of strike arbitration.<sup>55</sup>

Following Maurice, Goderich blamed much of the pointlessness and stagnation of modern politics on party strife. In 1853–54 he created a ginger group of other socially active radical MPs unwilling to pledge allegiance to party. Known as the 'Goderichites', two of the most prominent were Henry Bruce and Henry Layard. Though the formal group did not outlast the 1850s, these three remained close friends, reinforced later by William Forster (an MP from 1861) and Hughes himself (from 1865). All five were (usually) MPs for urban seats with a substantial working class. Bruce, Layard, and Forster saw themselves, in different ways, as outside the establishment (none had been to university). Forster and Bruce were both successful industrial employers who became MPs for their local town (in Forster's case, Bradford), anxious to pursue measures of practical benefit for it. Forster's time in France in 1848 had hardened his belief in the need for parliamentary reform and other measures of practical benefit for British workers. He sympathised with the co-operative movement, and took up the cause of education and voluntary colonisation. He had long disliked the principles of the Manchester School and had been one of Carlyle's warmest disciples in the 1840s. He then married Thomas Arnold's daughter in 1850, leaving the Quakers for Anglicanism and specifically for Maurice's 'new school'.<sup>56</sup> Bruce and Layard met through their common interests in the rapidly industrialising South Wales coalfields. Bruce's family owned the Dyffryn coalmining

<sup>55</sup> Christensen, *Christian Socialism*, pp. 298–300; A. Denholm, *Lord Ripon 1827–1909: A Political Biography* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 11–12, 23, 28.

<sup>56</sup> T. W. Reid, *Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), vol. I, pp. 212–13, 219, 256–7, 287, 309, 347.

estate and he became a stipendiary magistrate for Merthyr Tydfil in 1847, which familiarised him with social problems. He took up the 'condition of the people', working with local Dissenters among others, though personally he was an undogmatic Anglican who thought that no 'better man' than Maurice lived.<sup>57</sup> In 1852 he became Merthyr Tydfil's MP on the death of Sir John Josiah Guest, owner of the nearby Dowlais Ironworks, one of the largest regional employers. Dowlais was thereafter run by a consortium including Guest's widow Lady Charlotte, and Bruce himself. Layard was Charlotte Guest's cousin and close friend, and stayed frequently at the Guest estate in these years. Both he and Bruce were very struck by the solidarity, dignity, and potential respectability of the local workforce, and keen on education and good fellowship as a way of smoothing class tensions. In 1851–53 Layard gave popular lectures at Dowlais, and then to Mechanics' Institutes and working-men's audiences in other places, on the subject which had recently made him famous, his travels in the Near East and pioneering excavation of the ancient Assyrian capital of Nineveh.

Of these men, only Layard was not directly influenced by Maurice. His formation was much more anti-clerical: he was brought up in Bloomsbury in the 1830s and mixed with progressive intellectuals associated with University College London. He had a logical and essentially Benthamite approach to many political issues and was a self-proclaimed rebel against social conventions. He left England at the age of 22 in 1839 and spent nearly all the next decade exploring and living in the Ottoman Empire and Persia. This was initially driven by a Romantic desire for self-fulfilment but in time turned into a painfully protracted search for employment in the diplomatic service. Layard's politics were crucially shaped by this prolonged insecurity (which his three brothers also experienced, in the army or diplomacy) and the unfairness of a state patronage system that seemed biased in favour of aristocratic families. *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849), his best-selling account of his excavations, projected an image of him as a self-made adventurer whose initiative, perseverance, and management of ordinary natives had allowed him single-handedly to defeat the obstacles to success thrown up by hostile locals and unforgiving territory. This was a classless manliness of which the whole country could be proud. He boasted of leaving Britain with 'no patron and with small means . . . ; I was thrown entirely upon my own decision and ingenuity'. He went out not to ally with 'the great and affluent of other nations', but to 'sojourn among the people, that I might be . . . improved

<sup>57</sup> *Letters of the Rt. Hon. Henry Austin Bruce, Lord Aberdare of Duffryn*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1902), vol. I, pp. 23, 204.

by their council'.<sup>58</sup> The myth of Layard as a 'man of the people' was crucial in his political success. Even before becoming an MP, in 1852, he was invited to join the government as a junior minister after the sacking of Palmerston, the most popular man in Lord John Russell's cabinet, in order to counter the widespread charge that the government had reverted to aristocratic Whiggery. The radical *Daily News* averred that the appointment 'sets at naught exclusion and caste pretensions ... it indicates a desire to employ the true workers of life'.<sup>59</sup>

Layard used his discovery of Nineveh not just to portray himself as a courageous common man but also to preach the merits of class collaboration along Mauricean-Goderichite lines. In his addresses to popular audiences in 1851–53, he explained the fall of ancient Nineveh in terms of the Assyrians' inability to use religion and politics to build bridges between the classes. The rulers of Nineveh 'had no rational faith nor true liberty; their religion was a gross and demoralising superstition, their political condition the mere arbitrary will of one man or of one class'. The governors and the governed were 'bound together by no tie', just the relation of 'master and slave', while 'high priests and pontiffs of their days, the bishops and clergy, made a trade and a mystery of religion. Consequently, there was no bond of union or sympathy between the ministers of religion and the worshippers'. Throughout history, many regimes had fallen for the same reason. 'Nations must be communities of progress, and representatives of the people should be the reflex of the people's mind'; Christianity 'teaches us that all classes of society should be bound together by one common tie'. Had there been a Mechanics' Institute in Nineveh, the classes would have developed mutual sympathies and it would not now be 'a heap of earth'.<sup>60</sup> Effective popular leadership and better education were the answers.

Layard's particular addition to the armoury of the Goderichites was his advocacy of meritocratic administrative reform, which became an obsessive crusade for him during the Crimean War. In fact the core Christian socialists – including Goderich – had criticised the idea of public

<sup>58</sup> Layard at Aylesbury, *Buckinghamshire Advertiser*, 19 June 1852; see also the review of his *Discoveries among the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* in *Times*, 17 May 1853. The best source for the various speeches that Layard made in 1851–53 is the scrapbook volume of newspaper cuttings kept in the Layard Papers, British Library, Add Mss 58174, from which this and the following two footnotes derive.

<sup>59</sup> *Daily News*, 14 February 1852; see also Layard in *Buckinghamshire Advertiser*, 10 July 1852; for Granville, see P. Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830–1852* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 274.

<sup>60</sup> *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 6 February 1852; *Buckinghamshire Advertiser*, 10 July 1852; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 3 February 1853; Report of the meeting of the Common Council, 9 February 1854, Add Mss 58174, fo.128.

appointments by competitive examination and intellect, as another kind of class politics and a declaration for mechanism rather than morality in the state.<sup>61</sup> However, from 1856 they took up the cause of civil service and army reform. Goderich's change of mind was partly because he, an enthusiast for military efficiency, had been shocked at the war's misconduct, partly because the campaign for administrative reform made the Mechanics' Institutes themselves demand competitive entry to the civil service, and partly because by giving 'a great impulse to schools and colleges', including the Arnoldised public schools, open competition might in fact enhance the place of Christianity in the state.<sup>62</sup>

When he became a junior war office minister in 1859, Goderich, now Ripon, took up army reform of a different, but impeccably Christian socialist, kind: almost single-handedly, he put the state's weight decisively behind the idea of volunteer corps of citizens from all classes in order to meet the French invasion scare. The idea of a responsible popular defence force was applauded by many radicals, not least if it meant less government spending on an aristocratic and militaristic officer class. But Christian socialists were particularly enthusiastic, seeing it as a living example of class collaboration for a nationally unifying non-materialistic end. Hughes hoped that it would 'in the end bind the nation together again in many other ways'.<sup>63</sup> The Working Men's College organised a very popular corps; Bruce captained one in south Wales and Forster formed one among his Bradford millworkers. In 1862 Ripon also helped to secure the legislation that gave co-operative associations a legal status with limited liability.

The reward for their political activism was that Layard (1861), Bruce (1862), and Forster (1865) all joined Ripon (now in the Lords) as junior ministers in Palmerston's Liberal government of 1859–66. This implied that government was no longer socially exclusive; Layard was one of the first ministers to discuss government policy regularly and straightforwardly in speeches to his popular constituency (Southwark), leading to press comment that it was now possible to be 'at once a placeman and a patriot'.<sup>64</sup> In Gladstone's new Liberal ministry of 1868, Bruce and Ripon entered the cabinet while the other two were just outside it; all four dined together to celebrate. Meanwhile, the passage of a major

<sup>61</sup> Maurice, *Administrative Reform*, p. 12, and *Learning and Working*, pp. xviii–xix; Denholm, *Ripon*, pp. 11–12; J.L. Davies, *St. Paul and Modern Thought* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1856), pp. 81–82.

<sup>62</sup> Goderich, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, CXLI, 1406–7, 24 April 1856; Denholm, *Ripon*, p. 47.

<sup>63</sup> T. Hughes, 'The Volunteer's catechism, with a few words on butts', *Macmillan's Magazine* 2 (1860), 193.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 5 December 1864; see Layard, *Times*, 22 November 1861, p. 10.



Reform Act in 1867 ensured that the major question would be how to govern the expanded political nation. Gladstone himself had fought the election essentially only on two policies, Ireland and economy; there was no broader government manifesto. There was, however, a general, unprecedented anxiety to address the interests of the large urban working-class electorate. Over many years the Goderichites had established a title to speak for it, which is why they became so prominent. Unfortunately, others also had plans for reform which they claimed would meet working men's needs. An unsettling question emerged: who was to define those needs? Sectional working-class lobbies like trade unions? Sectional pressure groups from the big towns led by middle-class radicals? Or – as the Goderichites hoped – earnest propertied-class proponents of the good of the working man?

The first Gladstone government addressed many issues on which the Goderichites had campaigned. Open competition was brought into the civil service; the purchase of commissions in the army was abolished. Trade union demands for improved legal status were addressed, and the principle of arbitration was advanced, most notably for international disputes (over the Alabama affair, led by Ripon). Attention was paid to the living and working conditions of working men, through mines regulation, regulation of drunkenness, and sanitary and poor law reform. Bruce as home secretary and Ripon as lord president of the council were the two heavyweight cabinet ministers most consistently involved across the range of social reform measures, while Hughes actively pressed union leaders' demands. Cowper-Temple led the campaign to secure access to open spaces for urban populations, while Layard as first commissioner of works attempted to beautify London architecture. Of course, they were not the only politicians now urging legislation in these areas: Robert Lowe as chancellor, an ally of Layard in the earlier battles for open competition, was instrumental in civil service reform, and other backbench MPs for large towns, like A. J. Mundella, publicised working conditions.<sup>65</sup>

The most important of all the government's measures was the introduction of a national system of elementary education in 1870, which more than anything bore the stamp of the Goderichites. They had consistently advocated the principle of extending state responsibility for working-class education. Indeed, even Maurice, who had initially opposed state involvement in education as striking a Benthamite blow against religion, had come to support government extension plans from 1847, owing to his dislike of the educational damage done by the

<sup>65</sup> I have surveyed a lot of this activity in my *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), ch. 10.

dogmatism and negativity of warring religious parties at local level.<sup>66</sup> By 1868 a consensus was forming behind a major extension of state education, crucially helped by the bills that Bruce and Forster introduced as backbenchers in 1867–68. After the election the two ministers formally responsible for education policy were Ripon and Forster, and their Act of 1870 was a demonstrably Christian piece of work. Schools run by local boards were to be established in areas where existing provision by the churches was deemed inadequate, after they had a year's grace to build more. Existing voluntary schools were to get central government funding if they operated a conscience clause. After enormous difficulty, the religious teaching to be given in the board schools was fixed by an amendment introduced by Cowper-Temple (with wording probably suggested by Davies) that no distinctively denominational catechism or formulary was to be taught there. As Forster wrote in 1869, the legislation should assume that 'we are and mean to remain a Christian people; and next, that we have made up our minds that the Government shall not . . . attempt to teach any special form of Christian faith'.<sup>67</sup> This was a broad church triumph as well as the decisive step in the provision of mass schooling.

Yet though the educational compromise of 1870 lasted for many years, it destroyed Liberal Party unity and did particular damage to its architects. Liberal Dissenting activists bitterly attacked its bias towards the church, and a powerful group of radicals, centred on Birmingham and the National Education League, argued that the state should pay only for secular education in both Britain and Catholic Ireland. This agitation spilled over into a revived campaign for church disestablishment, so that all ties between state and church would be cut. The former Dissenter Forster was the biggest target of their anger, and local activists tried very hard to unseat him at Bradford. Though they failed, his chance of leading the Liberal Party was at an end. Ripon was also deeply unhappy at that campaign to remove religious responsibility from the state. He resigned from the government in 1873 and spectacularly converted to Catholicism in 1874, perhaps in an attempt to find the organic religious unity that the Dissenters were frustrating.<sup>68</sup>

This was part of a dramatic new pattern: all the Goderichites found the political climate after 1867 much more unpleasant than they had expected, because the emerging tendencies in popular Liberalism were not, after all, congenial to them. Bruce was the first to be defeated, at Merthyr in 1868, squeezed out of a much-expanded constituency by the

<sup>66</sup> See Maurice, *Maurice*, vol. I, pp. 277, 433, 544–46. For similar reasons, Kingsley actually joined the National Education League briefly in 1869, before realising with horror how anti-clerical it was: Kingsley, *Kingsley*, vol. II, pp. 299–302.

<sup>67</sup> Reid, *Forster*, vol. I, p. 468. <sup>68</sup> See Denholm, *Ripon*, p. 107.

combination of two different organised campaigns on behalf of other candidates, by activist nonconformists and by miners resisting double-shift mining. Though he found a less demanding seat, he escaped with relief to the Lords in 1873. Layard's schemes for London were prevented by what he interpreted as Treasury and ratepayer meanness, and he resigned his seat in 1869 to take up a diplomatic career, subsequently bitterly criticising the way in which sectional interest groups in constituencies were frustrating MPs' freedom of action.<sup>69</sup> Hughes had left Lambeth for a small borough at the 1868 election as he had alienated the shopkeeper vote: he was appalled by the number of MPs in the Parliament of 1868–74 who were the mouthpieces of pressure groups. Having supported union leaders in their campaigns of the late 1860s, he became upset by their increasing militancy and lost their backing by refusing to support repeal of the law making intimidation by picketers a criminal offence. Defeated in 1874, he ruefully noted that he would never find another seat because his views on the church made him unelectable as a liberal in the north and his support for co-operation made him unelectable in the south.<sup>70</sup>

All these figures saw themselves as sympathetic to the best interests of working men, but unsympathetic to modern party pressure and to the various groups of sectional activists who were manipulating the new electoral system. Therefore they did not advocate further parliamentary reform, since this would merely exacerbate the problem; it was in fact in opposition to the proposed extension of the county franchise that Ripon resigned from the cabinet in 1873. There was nothing inconsistent here, since with the partial exception of Forster none had ever prioritised parliamentary reform, even in the early 1850s.

### III

Writers on the Christian socialist tradition in the twentieth century have concentrated on its legacy for the left, both in progressive politics and in the church itself.<sup>71</sup> But among the political class itself, the norm for sympathisers with the first generation of Christian socialists was in fact to move over to the liberal unionist cause in the 1880s, and thus into

<sup>69</sup> M. H. Port, 'A contrast in styles at the office of works: Layard and Ayrton: aesthete and economist', *Historical Journal* 27 (1984), 151–76; Layard to Gregory, 26 February 1874, Layard papers, 38949, fo. 132.

<sup>70</sup> E. C. Mack and W. H. G. Armytage, *Thomas Hughes: The Life of the Author of Tom Brown's Schooldays* (London: Benn, 1952), pp.196, 222.

<sup>71</sup> For a useful warning that this involves some misreading of Maurice himself, see Morris, *F.D. Maurice*, pp.158–60.

alliance with the Conservative Party. This is not surprising, both because of the conservative elements in the thought of Maurice and Kingsley and the organicism and distrust of sectarianism inherent in the movement. The circumstances of politics in the 1870s and 1880s were almost bound to make Mauriceans anxious about the direction of Gladstonian liberalism. The party had to take account of militant nonconformists bent on undermining the principle of a national church, as well as their allies who campaigned for strict temperance measures (going well beyond the compromise of Bruce's Licensing Bills of 1871 and 1872) and for repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (Acts which Ripon had advocated, on grounds of sanitary reform and military efficiency). Another novelty was those, led by Joseph Chamberlain, who wanted to use the new mass party organisation to increase the influence of constituency activists over party policy. This threatened to turn MPs into delegates and the Liberal Party into a collection of faddist lobby groups, a development completely at odds with the old Hughes/Layard ideal of the high-minded MP taking a broad view of national needs. Then, in the 1880s, Parnell's Irish nationalists emerged as the most determined and effective of all the single-issue groups trying to change Liberal policy.

By contrast, unionism represented a commitment not only to a less partisan politics but also to a series of integrative ideals. These included, most importantly, the idea of the United Kingdom itself, against a Home Rule Bill that unionists felt would end with the abandonment of Ireland. For many it also included an idea of empire as an organic unit with a moral purpose. The greatest practical exponent of liberal Christian imperialism in the 1880s was Forster, who represented the Scramble for Africa as an urgent mission against native slavery and barbarism and the dubious morals of other powers.<sup>72</sup> The greatest theoretical exponent was Seeley, who taught Cambridge History undergraduates that the expansion of England was a global duty.<sup>73</sup> This was a coherent vision: in the 1850s, Maurice had preached that the problem of British rule in India had been its lack of Christian spirit, not its laudable ambition to spread European blessings to Indians.<sup>74</sup> Most Christian socialists also continued their youthful enthusiasm for military activity, now that the army could be represented as a genuinely national body organised for righteous ideals. Maurice's son and grandson both rose very high in the army, as did Bruce's son. So it is unsurprising that few of the radical young men

<sup>72</sup> Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, pp. 358–64.

<sup>73</sup> R. Shannon, 'John Robert Seeley and the idea of a national church' in R. Robson (ed.), *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark* (London: Bell, 1967), pp. 236–67.

<sup>74</sup> F.D. Maurice, *The Indian Crisis: Five Sermons* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1857), p. 11.

around Maurice in the early 1850s remained Gladstonians after 1886, either in politics or in the clerisy.<sup>75</sup> Practically the only ones who did were Ripon and Bruce, now Lord Aberdare, both of whom were insulated from demotic pressure in the Lords.<sup>76</sup>

Another attraction of unionism was its defence of the established national church. Hughes and Davies were among the leaders of the National Church Reform Union set up in 1870 to ensure that the church continued to be national and democratic after the 1867 Reform Act.<sup>77</sup> Exposure to the political sphere left it open 'to all the good influences which God is breathing through the world' and more likely to behave with 'courage, straightforwardness, and large-hearted consideration'. Disestablishment must be resisted because it would be a victory for state secularism while it would leave the church prey to sectarian or antiquated notions.<sup>78</sup> Over the next thirty years, the Dissenting threat was seen off: the English Church Establishment survived, while 'Cowper-Temple religion' was taught in the nation's board schools without much complaint. Moreover, the triumph of open competition in the civil service, too often seen as a victory for Benthamism, arguably contributed to Christianising the state by giving the Arnoldised public schools a head start in recruitment. From a Christian socialist perspective the threat of a purely secular challenge to Christian politics – a radical intelligentsia undermining social morality and political stability – was surely smaller by the 1870s than in the 1830s. In 1877 Davies based his argument for an ethical foreign policy in the East on the fact that it was now 'a nearly general conviction' that in domestic politics 'we ought to be governed by the aims of a high Christian morality'.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, Christian socialism in politics should be seen as an increasingly rooted movement to invigorate and Christianise the political and spiritual leadership of the nation, rather than a particular view about either democracy or state intervention. The major institutional question for Christian socialists was less what degree of parliamentary reform

<sup>75</sup> This was part of a more general trend among Liberal intellectuals, as was first discussed by J. Roach, 'Liberalism and the Victorian intelligentsia', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 13 (1957), 58–81.

<sup>76</sup> His friend Grant Duff (another ex-teacher at the Working Men's College) commented on the oddity of Bruce not becoming a Unionist, given his milieu: *Letters of Bruce*, vol. I, p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> T. Hughes, *The Old Church: What Shall We Do with It?* (London: Macmillan, 1878), p. 16; J. P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867–1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 100.

<sup>78</sup> J. L. Davies, 'Erastianism versus ecclesiasticism', *Contemporary Review*, 30 (June 1877), 164; idem, 'Congregationalism and the Church of England', *Contemporary Review*, 17 (April 1871), 23–25.

<sup>79</sup> Idem, *Religious Aspects of the Eastern Question* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1877), p. 10.

might be appropriate at any point than how leaders were to infuse incarnational Christian values into the political nation, whatever its make-up. As for state social reform, they could urge it if the prevailing dogma was too insistently individualist, but they could equally easily condemn principles like the compulsory redistribution of property as mechanical and – like Malthusianism – destructive of family relationships.<sup>80</sup> In the twentieth century, their principles could be applied so variously in specific political situations that it is pointless, albeit popular, to seek to define Christian socialism by its philosophy on day-to-day questions about taxation and distribution of resources. Indeed, it is unhelpful to try to fit Christian socialism into a party schema at all, given its inherent distrust of partisanship. This does not mean that politics was irrelevant to Christian socialism. The original activists played a major part in urging the need for class collaboration after 1848 and for popularising an organicist view of politics that required a broader sense of the political nation and a genuine engagement with working-class culture. Though they were not alone in this, they certainly helped to ensure that the perspective of political elites was widened over time, and they had a particularly significant impact on sanitary and educational reform. In the 1850s and 1860s most adherents of these wider perspectives called themselves liberals, assuming that only liberals could adopt a national position as against a class-bound conservatism. In the 1880s and 1890s the conservative movement became happier to adopt similar language, in which it was very clearly helped by the ingress of many unionists from the Liberal Party. By the twentieth century, many of the key principles of Christian socialism were widely shared in all parties, even if the talk of ‘socialism’ made this less widely acknowledged in the Conservative Party than on the left. Indeed, the institutionally unthreatening elements of the original movement made it a better natural fit with conservatism than is usually recognised. Perhaps, therefore, it should not surprise us that, a century after Henry Montagu Butler and Alexander Macmillan joined forces in 1855 as two of the five founders of the Cambridge Working Men’s College, their two great-nephews were in the midst of a long rivalry to lead the Conservative and Unionist Party – a battle that was won by Maurice Harold Macmillan.

<sup>80</sup> See *Social Questions from the Point of Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1885).

## 8 On the 'Absence of Spirit'

### The Legacy of the Abstinence from Revolution in Belgium

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*Widukind De Ridder*

Belgium remained ostensibly unaffected by the wave of revolutions that swept over Europe in 1848. This allegedly sprang from the 'powerlessness of the labouring masses' combined with the 'quite adequate response of the government' to the revolutionary events in Paris.<sup>1</sup> This 'social approach' to revolutionary abstinence has never been put into question. It even allowed historians to impart a historical form to the sociopolitical pacification strategies of the twentieth century.

The consociational model of democracy in Belgium aimed at easing and eliminating tensions, caused by a number of so-called cross-cutting cleavages: the religious cleavage (clerical-secular), the socioeconomical cleavage (capital-labour), and the language cleavage (French-Dutch). This narrative of Belgium as a 'pacification democracy' has offered a framework to analyse societal developments and the emergence of the party system over the long term. Since the 1950s, for instance, solutions to social and political problems were said to take the interests of the different 'ideological pillars' into account. Their ideological legitimacy was further sustained through social-scientific invocations of 'pluralism', 'tolerance', and 'citizen involvement'.<sup>2</sup> When social and political history were modernised, following the introduction of the *Annales School*, historians were quick to emulate and internalise this model along with its ideological ramifications.<sup>3</sup> One could indeed argue that Belgian historiography gradually came to mirror the pluralist features of its own object of study. Considering the political realm as merely the extension of an

<sup>1</sup> E. Gubin and J.-P. Nandrin, 'Het liberale en burgerlijke België: 1846–1878' in V. Dujardin et al (eds.), *Nieuwe geschiedenis van België* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2005), p. 256, E. Witte, J. Craeybeckx, and A. Meynen, *Political History of Belgium, From 1830 Onwards* (Antwerp: ASP editions, 2009), p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Witte, Craeybeckx, and Meynen, *Political History*, see also A. Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> For an overview, see E. Witte, *Voor vrede, Democratie, Wereldburgerschap en Europa. Belgische Historici en de Naoorlogse Politiek-ideologische Projecten* (Kapellen: Pelckmans, 2009).



underlying social reality became both an interwoven and self-sufficient model of historical interpretation.

The 'powerlessness of the labouring masses' consequently found its self-confirmation in the 'deficiencies' of what was eponymously referred to as 'early socialism'. Deriving the political from the social not only seems to come at a considerable interpretative cost; arduous historical research might even appear to confer historical legitimacy to the existing social and political order. Historians' guileless endorsement of the 'political and ideological projects of the post-war period'<sup>4</sup> might thus in good Hegelian fashion be considered as marked by the 'Absence of Spirit'.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of considering the abstinence from revolution in negative terms, as the 'inability of the democratic movement to sway the proletarian masses',<sup>6</sup> it will be argued that it was simply inherent in the internal political dynamics of Belgian liberalism at large. The odyssey of French republicanism, for example, should be analysed in the light of the strategic and ever-shifting alliances between the different factions of the nascent liberal party (1846). Debates of a distinctly political nature harkened back to the experiences of the French Revolution and the attempts of the subsequent regimes in 'Belgium' to redefine the relation between church and state. Who wielded spiritual power and what did 'national sovereignty' mean? Could the control of the church over charity and education be transferred to the state, and if so, on what basis? This is arguably the reason why the 'social' could find its fullest expression in the demand for universal suffrage in a property-based political system.

My approach could also render intelligible why the distinctly political vocabulary of republicanism and 'early socialism' was informed by references to religion and language, without exhibiting any of the defining traits of what came to be known as the religious and the language cleavage. These references reclaimed for the 'people' what was either held in contempt by the state or 'distorted' by the Catholic Church: the 'common language' and the 'original message' of Christianity. Instead of strenuously reading a brief 'social moment'<sup>7</sup> into the initial articulation of the 'language cleavage', their relation should perhaps be inverted.

Discursive references to language and religion were an attempt at engendering the 'social' in wholly political terms and therefore subversive to the much broader struggle over restoration and renewal that was

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen, *Political History*, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Notably in the writings of Max Lamberty (1893–1975) with echoes in the *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, 3 vols. (Tielt: Lannoo, 1998).

inaugurated by the *Brabant Revolution* of 1789–90. In itself a remarkably conservative revolution against the liberal (church) reforms of the Austrian emperor Joseph II (*Josephinism*), this was a struggle which the subsequent regimes in ‘Belgium’ tried to settle through a series of uneasy compromises between church and state. The revolutionary chain of events eventually came to an end in 1848, through the firm identification of liberalism with the Belgian nation state. The non-revolution in Belgium consolidated an ideological and constitutional framework in which the struggle between liberals and Catholics could reclaim centre stage. Their opposing views were articulated with renewed clarity through the effective annulment of what might be considered the last political movement of ‘religious reform’ in Belgian history: the republican democrat movement. From the 1850s onwards their struggle was recast along positivist and secularist lines. Socialism, indeed, no longer sought to ‘reform’ the Christian Church but was conceived as its replacement.<sup>8</sup> Not unlike in France, the birth of socialism coincided with the birth of positivism.<sup>9</sup> Until 1848 ‘political positivism’ proved too radical in its anti-metaphysical stands and too politically conservative to arouse much enthusiasm. The anti-clerical idealisation of the ‘original spirit’ of Christianity, as a means of political and social criticism, would eventually give way to a ‘scientific approach’ to the ‘social question’. This is exemplified in the reception of Proudhon’s writings. When Proudhon’s ideas gained currency in the 1860s, his Belgian followers went to great lengths to dissociate him firmly from any ‘utopian’ suspicions.<sup>10</sup> This was as much framed by the experiences in France as it was by the fate of the ‘abstentious’ republican democrat movement in Belgium. This can be elaborated further by an evaluation of the demand for universal suffrage, in the wake of the French coup of 1851. In approaching these issues, our treatment is both chronological and thematic, while some restrictions of scope must also be noted. This is not an exhaustive intellectual history of the social and democratic movements that were operative in Belgium around 1848. For the sake of brevity, I will only retain what is strictly necessary for my subject from Marx’s involvement with the *Association Démocratique*.

<sup>8</sup> G. Stedman Jones, ‘Religion and the origins of socialism’ in I. Katznelson and G. Stedman Jones (eds.), *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 174.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>10</sup> K. Wils, *De Omweg van de Wetenschap: Het Positivisme en de Belgische en Nederlandse Intellectuele Cultuur, 1845–1914* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 148.

This chapter is divided into five parts. The [first section](#) offers an overview of ‘Belgian’ history, introducing the essentials on language, religion, and economy. The [second](#) discusses the aftermath of the Belgian Revolution of 1830, with some cursory remarks on the cultural and intellectual climate of the country. The [third](#) explores more fully the relation between French republicanism and early socialism, addressing the discourses on language and religion at the advent of the working-class movement. The [fourth](#) examines the articulation of the ‘social question’ in the wake of the subsistence crisis of the 1840s and the [fifth part](#) deals with the abstinence from revolution in 1848, outlining some of its ramifications.

## **I The United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815–39) and Restoration Europe**

In March 1815, William I was crowned king of the newly formed United Kingdom of the Netherlands, which comprised both present-day the Netherlands and Belgium. The constitution of 1815 satisfied the restorative aspirations of both post-Napoleonic Europe as well as the leading political circles in the north, which feared the numerical superiority of the Catholic south.<sup>11</sup> William I interpreted the constitution as formal legitimacy for his own brand of enlightened despotism, which endorsed the freedom of religion, while actively curtailing its public side. William’s policies were aimed at social-cultural integration and particularly resented by the southern elite. The propagation of Dutch as a language of culture went hand in hand with the spreading of enlightened ideas on religion and education.<sup>12</sup> In the wake of Napoleon’s imposition of French as a public language, the use of the common language seemed like the ultimate cement for the newly formed nation. After all, 75 per cent of its subjects were Dutch speakers, of which more than half lived in Flanders. In 1819 Dutch was consequently declared the compulsory language in public life in the Dutch-speaking southern parts of the kingdom, including Brussels in 1823. William did so by royal decree, ignoring the fact that French was the language of sociability among the elite in Flanders, while more than half of its Dutch-speaking population was illiterate. Despite some opposition, his policies were fully carried out and implemented. By the time of the Belgian Revolution of 1830 nearly

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the events that led up to the Belgian revolution see E. Witte, *De Constructie van België: 1828–1847* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> J. Weijermars, *Stiefbroeders: Zuid-Nederlandse Letteren en Natievorming onder Willem I, 1814–1834* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), pp. 169–71, 229–30.

all of his objectives were completely met.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to popular belief, language did not play a significant role in the opposition to his rule. With regard to social-economic unity, some of William's measures were even more successful. His economic policies sought to increase the commercial strength of the north, the industrial development of the south, and the exploitation of colonial properties.<sup>14</sup> By gaining access to new markets (e.g. Dutch colonies), industries in both Ghent and Liège flourished. The fiscal share of the south amounted to 50 per cent, while public expenditure never rose to more than 20 per cent. William also introduced taxes on consumer goods, with which the north was well acquainted but to which the south had never been subjected under French rule.<sup>15</sup> Young liberals were quick to organise themselves around a series of newspapers and began to politicise the concept of freedom. All of them had initially been supportive of King William's secularist and cultural policies, but when his rule by executive resolution was met with criticism in the 1820s, William responded with press trials. One of his main targets was the liberal newspaper *Courrier des Pays-Bas* (1821), headed by Louis de Potter. Advocates of a free press were quick to point out that out of roughly fifty of such trials only one took place in the north.<sup>16</sup> Catholics were internally divided between liberals and conservatives, but were fundamentally opposed to the king's measures in 1825 to put the education in the south under government control. A 'Monstrous Alliance' (Unionism) was formed between liberals and Catholics, thus sealing William's fate.

The revolutionaries of 1830 loosely adhered to a wide variety of ideological currents. French exiles, like Buonarroti in Brussels, helped to introduce liberal, democratic, and republican ideas among a growing class of young, dissatisfied intellectuals, many of whom gathered in Masonic lodges. Most notable among them was Louis de Potter, an apologist and propagator of unionism and, inspired by Babeuf's aborted plot of 1796, wanted to install a democratic republic through a brief dictatorship.<sup>17</sup> Jacobinism still prevailed among the old liberals, while

<sup>13</sup> R. Willemyns and J. De Groof, 'Is de taalpolitiek van Willem I werkelijk mislukt?' in S. Daalder, T. Janssen and J. Noordegraaf (eds.) *Taal in Verandering. Festschrift A. van Leuvensteijn* (Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU, 2004), pp. 185–91.

<sup>14</sup> H. Van der Wee, 'The industrial revolution in Belgium' in M. Teich and R. Porter (eds.) *The Industrial Revolution in National Context: Europe and the USA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 64–74.

<sup>15</sup> Witte, *Constructie van België*, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> B. Delbecke, 'Constitutional ideals, national identity and the limits of the law' in E. Claes, B. Keirsbilck and W. Devroe (eds.), *Facing the limits of the Law* (New York: Springer, 2009), p. 307.

<sup>17</sup> J. Kuypers, *Les Égalitaires en Belgique: Buonarroti et ses Sociétés Secrètes d'après des Documents Inédits, 1824–1836* (Brussels: Librairie Encyclopédique, 1960), pp. 6–7.

the most important group of young liberals were lawyers without revolutionary or secessionist aspirations, but who sought to increase political participation by amending the constitution of 1815. Their pragmatic approach and constitutionalism drove them close to liberal Catholics who, inspired by Lamennais' ideas on the separation between church and state, abandoned their original support for King William's secularist (state tutelage) policies. Adolphe Bartels, for instance, was a converted Catholic and republican who published some of his first articles in Lamennais' newspaper *L'Avenir*. Politicising the concept of freedom meant nothing other than criticising the government's interference in religious affairs.<sup>18</sup> The creation of the 'Monstrous Alliance' (1828) gained momentum, when preparatory seminaries for priests were closed and replaced by the government-controlled *Collegium Philosophicum* in 1825. Opposition to the *Collegium* quickly turned into a struggle for the freedom of education and the press and was linked to the liberal struggle for political representation. Meanwhile, the economic recession of 1829–30 had brought socioeconomic life in the south to a standstill, and artisans and a growing class of urban poor blamed the government for their distress. The stage was set for the Belgian Revolution of August–September 1830. Reports about the July Revolution in France reached Brussels and some considered it a renewed French Revolution. In August popular riots broke out and spread like wildfire all over the southern part of the kingdom. William was left disillusioned but would recognise the Belgian state only after signing the Treaty of London in 1839.<sup>19</sup>

## II The Kingdom of Belgium after the Revolution of 1830

Before the smoke had cleared, a provisional government proclaimed the independence of the 'Belgian provinces'. Some of its members reflected the different liberal currents of the revolution: Charles Rogier was a young liberal and Louis de Potter held republican ideas. Alexandre Gendebien advocated a Belgian union with France, while Emmanuel van der Linden wanted to remain loyal to king William I (*Orangism*). The provisional government organised elections by direct vote for the National Congress, a temporary legislative assembly. The property requirement for voting was, however, higher than under Dutch rule, allowing only 30,000 men to cast their vote. To these were added some 16,000 qualified

<sup>18</sup> A. Ghijsens, 'Aanzetten tot sociale politiek vanuit de middenklasse: Enkele ideologische aspecten vanuit de Brusselse radicale beweging (1830–1848)', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, XVII (1986), 3–4, 421–59.

<sup>19</sup> Witte, *Constructie van België*, p. 8.

voters, including the lower clergy. In order to counter *Orangist* currents in the cities, teachers were excluded. One-third of those eligible were *Orangists*, who gave up their right to vote, while more than half of all those eventually elected refused to take their seats. Members of liberal professions and the landed nobility vastly outnumbered the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie. Republicans and democrats had already suffered a major defeat when a draft of the constitution unsurprisingly opted for a constitutional monarchy instead of a republic. They were left decimated after the elections and Louis de Potter, who had not even bothered to stand for election, would later famously claim: 'Ce n'était pas la peine de verser tant de sang, pour si peu de chose' ('There was no point in spilling so much blood for so little result').<sup>20</sup> The constitution (1831) went down in history as the most liberal one on the European continent, but political freedom was nonetheless limited to less than 1 per cent of the population. The role of parliament was almost insignificant and freedom of the press was restricted by a stamp tax. Freedom of education and worship mainly served the interests of the Catholic Church, as did the freedom of assembly and association, which obviously did not apply to workers' coalitions. By actively supporting industrialisation, many of the early supporters of liberalism were brought into a more conservative alliance. Belgian industry flourished like never before, while migration from the countryside rose and gave way to an urban proletariat. The overall trade policy was marked by protectionism and the country's industrial centre of gravity quite drastically shifted from the Flemish region to Wallonia. Flanders had always been vastly more urbanised than Wallonia but was gradually turned into an economically and socially backward region. The cotton industry in Ghent, moreover, suffered tremendously in the 1830s by losing its markets in the Dutch-Indies. Ghent became the hotbed of *Orangist* resistance – a predominantly French-speaking movement – to the new regime, while the reliance on agriculture and domestic industry in Flanders would prove to be disastrous in the 1840s.<sup>21</sup>

In 1906, Louis Bertrand, one of the leading Belgian socialists, wrote what became the canonised history of the labour movement in Belgium.<sup>22</sup> 'Socialism' developed only after the First International, which set the stage for the foundation of the Belgian Workers Party in 1885. What came prior to 1848 can be roughly summarised as follows: Saint-Simonism in the 1830s and Fourierism in the 1840s, which only had some appeal among sections of the liberal bourgeoisie. As will be argued

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198. <sup>21</sup> Van der Wee, *Industrial Revolution*, pp. 64–74.

<sup>22</sup> L. Bertrand, *L'histoire de la Démocratie et du Socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830* (Brussels: Dechenne, 1906).

further, the impact of Buonarroti on early socialism in Belgium was, however, far greater than Bertrand was able to admit. This leads to a rather distorted view of the working-class movement prior to the Revolutions of 1848. In the aftermath of the Belgian Revolution, the republican democrats had been successfully marginalised and de Potter and Bartels were even temporarily forced into exile in France. Republican clubs nonetheless persisted in Brussels and were able to voice their discontent in *La Voix du Peuple* (1833), which closely followed democratic movements all over Europe. The driving force was Lucien Jottrand, a lawyer and veteran of the revolution who admired Lamennais as well as the American constitution. Their demands remained fairly simple: a republic that would bring about social justice through universal suffrage. The principle of freedom was no longer perceived as guaranteeing social equality, but this did not entail a fundamental social critique of liberal ideology. Jacob Kats, a weaver turned teacher and political playwright, allowed Jottrand and his republican democrats to link up with popular movements in Brussels and Ghent. Alliances were forged that would eventually make up the democratic scene which Karl Marx frequented during his stay in Brussels between 1845 and 1848.<sup>23</sup> In 1839 the attention of the democrats was focused on the parliamentary debates prior to the formal ratification of the Treaty of London and its involved loss of territories. It aligned them closer to the persisting *Orangist* resistance to the Belgian regime. Their impact was, however, limited to some passionate speeches and patriotic posturing. In the 1840s they would either fill the ranks of the progressive liberals or become the nucleus of early socialism. The political issues that dominated public debates in the 1840s exemplify the overall intellectual and cultural climate of Belgium. With the official recognition of the Belgian state in 1839, *Unionism* gradually gave way to rising tensions between liberals and Catholics, but neither the king nor the Catholic majority were eager to give up a system so favourable to them. The church had made full use of the constitutionally guaranteed liberties and in less than a decade had restored its virtual monopoly in education and charity, nullifying the progressive Catholics in its wake. A new generation of liberals tried to give the constitution a more liberal interpretation and used it to oppose *Unionist* policies and clericalism. Municipal elections allowed them to build up a considerable following, especially in Brussels. Almost half of those eligible to vote lived in Brussels. Masonic lodges played a crucial role in organising this nascent party-political liberalism. The lodges had become politicised as early as 1836–37 and were met with fierce Catholic

<sup>23</sup> Witte, *Constructie van België*, p. 7.



resistance. They set up the liberal election committee, *L'Alliance*, in 1841, which spread over the entire country. Mass petition movements were organised by local authorities and accompanied by heated press debates. Former *Orangists* strengthened the ranks of this liberal anti-clerical opposition as well as democrats who strove for a parliamentary reform movement. Ideals of a secular society with reduced monarchical power and free trade bound them together, but the so-called 'social question' proved to be a great divider. Against the predominantly social-conservative faction emerged a progressive liberal wing, which advocated the gradual expansion of the electorate and paternalist policies. In order to strengthen their position in *L'Alliance*, they tried to bring some 'early socialists' on board. They partially succeeded, but it eventually led to their downfall, for the more conservative elements broke away and formed their own group, *L'Association Libérale*, around the time of the failed Hunger March on Brussels in 1846. In that same year the loose association of opposition groups was eventually forged into a political party at the Liberal Congress in Brussels. Less than a year later, they celebrated a victory when the first all-liberal government in Belgian history was sworn in.<sup>24</sup>

The foundation of the Liberal Party would bring republicans and democrats back into a more conservative sphere. The state institutions moreover actively strove to bring about a sense of national belonging; first of all through *Unionist* policies, and afterwards, by ensuring that it would remain an integral part of both liberal and Catholic ideologies.<sup>25</sup> The French language became the symbol of national independence, while regional dialects of Dutch, as for instance spoken in Brussels by more than 70 per cent of the population, became synonymous with backwardness and illiteracy. In order to bring about national unity, French – as the harbinger of progress and modernity – would become the only official language and an instrument of social integration for the elite. The use of languages was made 'optional' by the constitution but the government's language policies were not at all incompatible with actively promoting a sense of Flemish national belonging, as an important sub-identity, as it gave Belgium a 'glorious' history dating back to the middle ages. The arts were also promoted in order to bring about a sense of national identity. The development of a politics of culture gave full legitimacy to the liberties and rights as inscribed in the constitution.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Witte, Craeybeckx & Meynen, *Political History*, pp. 37–39.

<sup>25</sup> J.-B. Nothomb, 'Essai historique et politique sur la Révolution belge, Bruxelles, 1833' in H. Stijnen, *De Onvoltooid Verleden Tijd. Een Geschiedenis van de Monumenten en Landschapszorg in België, 1835–1940* (Brussels: Stichting Vlaams Erfgoed, 1998), p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Witte, *Constructie van België*, pp. 170–88.

### III Republican Democrats, 'Early Socialists', and the Advent of the Working-Class Movement

This cultural climate did not benefit the existence of groups that wanted to wrestle free from the regime. Some middle-class intellectuals were, however, insufficiently integrated within the newly organised elites and, together with craftsmen, they would develop into the core of the democratic-republican movement. Chief among the intellectuals were the wealthy Delhasse brothers and Lucien Jottrand and Adolphe Bartels, who had been left disheartened by the outcome of the revolution. In 1832 Jottrand became the editor-in-chief of the *Courrier des Pays-Bas*, appropriately re-named as the *Courrier Belge*. Bartels had returned to Belgium in the 1830s and continued to pair Catholicism with radical democratic republicanism. In cities like Brussels, Ghent, and Liège democratic associations were set up with their own press but they experienced difficulties in linking up with the lower-middle class, which were already operating on the fringes of the nascent liberal party. Craftsmen, on the other hand, offered a new recruiting ground and could further the democratic-republican agenda. Middle-class intellectuals gave financial support and infused their ideas with Saint-Simonism and some vague references to Babeuf and his friend and colleague Philippe Buonarroti.<sup>27</sup> These references were, however, less 'vague' than Belgian historiography has led us to believe.

The Babouvist and later Carbonarist leader had lived in Brussels between 1823 and the July revolution of 1830. During his stay in Brussels, and with the help of Louis de Potter, Buonarroti not only wrote his famous history of Babeuf's 'Conspiracy of the Equals' and edited and published his writings,<sup>28</sup> but he also organised a couple of popular and secret organisations. Like most French exiles, Buonarroti was a member of the Masonic Lodge *Les Amis Philanthropes*.<sup>29</sup> With the help of de Potter and Félix Delhasse, he organised his disciples (*catecument*) in a Babouvist phalanx between 1824 and 1825. However, only a very small number of them were initiated in its revolutionary implications. The *Charbonnerie* of 1823, moreover, did not yet focus on property questions and egalitarianism.<sup>30</sup>

Buonarroti was supportive of *Unionism* and, upon his return to Paris in 1830, tried to influence the outcome of the Belgian Revolution. De Potter's ill-fated republican programme was obviously indebted to

<sup>27</sup> Gubin and Nandrin, 'Het liberale en burgerlijke België', 257–60.

<sup>28</sup> P. Buonarroti, *Conspiration pour l'Égalité, dite de Babeuf*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Librairie Romantique, 1828).

<sup>29</sup> Kuypers, *Égalitaires en Belgique*, p. 5. <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

Buonarroti but through the intermediary of Charles-Antoine Teste, Buonarroti would also try to influence the liberalism of Charles Rogier in a more republican way.<sup>31</sup> In Paris, he reorganised the *Charbonnerie Democratique Universelle* (1833) and it took Charles-Antoine Teste's: *Projet de Constitution Républicaine* as its ideological blueprint.<sup>32</sup> Belgium soon had its own branches headed by the brothers Félix and Alexandre Delhasse. The reformed *Charbonnerie* no longer kept the revolutionary and egalitarian goals a secret of the –Masonic-like – High Degrees. The time had come to instil a sense of 'association' among workers and artisans, junior officers and soldiers. They had to become familiar with the discretion imposed by secret societies. Lessons had to be drawn from the 'betrayed' Revolution of 1830.<sup>33</sup> Teste advocated a revolution, which he clearly distinguished from a 'political' revolution that would result in the immediate enactment of his refurbished version of the constitution of 1793. Based on past experiences, he dubbed such a revolution 'dangerous' and even *funeste*.<sup>34</sup> Only through 'education' could one hope to 'combat egoism' and subsequently 'maintain and perpetuate the love of equality together with its proud and fraternal morals'.<sup>35</sup> A number of short-lived newspapers, such as *Le Libéral* (1835–36) and *Le Radical* (1837–38), propagated these ideas and Félix Delhasse eventually republished the *Projet de Constitution Républicaine* in 1836. He declared 'the dogma of egalitarianism the fundamental principle of Christianity' and firmly opposed it to what he dubbed – in accordance with Buonarroti and Teste – 'egoism'. The ultimate goal was 'to put the maxim of Christ into practise: all men are brothers'. It was precisely this idea, to supplant the Christian Church with a successor, which made the members of the *Charbonnerie* eventually susceptible to Saint-Simonism and Fourierism. In a similar vein, the *Charbonnerie* also considered Babeuf and Buonarroti the precursors to Robert Owen. Reflecting in 1828 on Babeuf's abortive plot, Buonarroti wrote: 'What the democrats could not bring about in France, a generous man has tried to put into practice in Britain and America. The Scotsman Robert Owen ... has recently established a couple of *établissements* where several thousands of men peacefully live under the soft regime of perfect equality'.<sup>36</sup> Rather than opening a new window of revolutionary opportunity, reviving the

<sup>31</sup> A. Galante Garrone, *Philippe Buonarroti et les Révolutionnaires du XIXe Siècle, 1828–1837* (Paris: Champ Libre, 1975), pp. 285–87.

<sup>32</sup> C.-A. Teste, *Projet de Constitution Républicaine et Déclaration des Principes Fondamentaux de la Société; Précédés d'un Exposé des motifs* (Paris: Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés, 1833).

<sup>33</sup> Kuypers, *égalitaires en Belgique*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>34</sup> C.-A. Teste, *Constitution Républicaine*, pp. 42–43. <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> Buonarroti, *Conspiration*, p. 296.

memory of Babeuf's abortive plot suggests an attempt to bring the French Revolution to a peaceful and harmonious end.

Five *ventes* gathered regularly in Brussels around 1835, one of which was 'Flemish' (*Het Gennootschap Anneessens*) and counted workers among its members. The *Charbonnerie* was renamed *Panadelfie* in 1835 and its branches were henceforth called *Falanges*. The phalanx *Anneessens* had Jacob Kats as its secretary and mainly discussed the question of the brief dictatorship after the revolution or Condorcet's proposal for a progressive income tax as a temporary measure. Secondary associations were set up and filled with sympathisers. They were meant to serve as front organisations that tried to educate the people of their rights as citizens.

Kats' *Maetschappij der Verbroedering* (Fraternal Society), for instance, was set up as early as 1833 and turned folk theatre into an instrument to bring about political emancipation. Its plays were meant to educate and politicise the working class and were both ferociously anti-clerical and utopian. It is mainly through these front-organisations that the *Panadelfie* exercised some influence among workers. Leaflets were distributed that, according to government officials, propagated the ideas of Babeuf 'modified by some Saint-Simonian extravagancies'. The leaflets called upon the workers to organise themselves into republican associations. Robespierre's *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme* (1793) was also in circulation, prompting the government into drawing a comparison between the influence of Parisian republicans on the Canut revolt in Lyon (1834) and the possibility of a popular uprising in Ghent with its 30,000 workers.<sup>37</sup> This proves, moreover, that despite the continuing spread of industrialisation in Wallonia, the city of Ghent was still Belgium's industrial heartland.

The members of the phalanx *Anneessens* solemnly swore that 'the individualist and bourgeois doctrine of liberalism would make way for equality, fraternity and unity'. This notion of 'unity' immediately referred to the increased tensions between liberals and Catholics. Although the *Panadelfie* felt betrayed by *Unionism*, it stubbornly refused to side with the liberals and continued to pair its republicanism with references to Lamennais. Jacob Kats, for instance, quoted his *Paroles d'un Croyant* (1834) in translation. Lamennais' writings of the 1820s had of course influenced the opposition to William's religious policies but from 1830 onwards, Lamennais had considerably radicalised his earlier views, which brought him into open conflict with the church. In accordance with the *Panadelfie*'s 'entryist' tactics, Kats began to befriend the schismatic, Catholic-apostolic priest Charles-Henri Helsen, who preached both in

<sup>37</sup> Kuypers, *Égalitaires en Belgique*, pp. 40–44.

French and Dutch in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of working-class Brussels.<sup>38</sup> Kats even wrote a curious – and now lost – brochure, which according to its title contained ‘A clear statement that Jesus-Christ is the saviour of mankind.’<sup>39</sup> This was more than mere ‘entryist’ rhetoric, since Buonarroti had already written in 1828: ‘The pure doctrine of Jesus, presented as an emanation of the natural religion, of which it did not differ, could support a wise reform and be the source of truly social morals that are at odds with materialism.’<sup>40</sup> Louis de Potter, who co-edited Babeuf’s writings, had studied and admired the Church Reform of Joseph II (*Josephinism*). Although generally side-lined as a mere biographical curiosity, de Potter was indeed first and foremost a prolific historian of Christianity, and would remain so throughout his life.<sup>41</sup> When he eventually advocated the ‘rational socialism’ of Colins de Ham, this was arguably nothing other than the logical outcome of a life-long quest to find an alternative for the Christian Church.<sup>42</sup> This was a quest common to many of his contemporaries, like Jottrand, but one which has fallen between the cracks of the so-called ‘religious’ and ‘social’ cleavage ever since.

His public activities brought Kats onto the radar of the local police and the secret services but also increased his reputation among liberal democrats of all ranks who financed his activities.<sup>43</sup> In one his plays, *Het Aerdsch Parady's* (The Garden of Eden, 1835), Kats read out the constitution of his ‘Colony of Liberty’.<sup>44</sup> The Colony of Liberty was set in a remote corner of the United States, where a ‘republican community’ was ‘harmoniously’ living in ‘the state of nature’. The play ended with a Marseillaise sung in Dutch. The influence of Babeuf but also English and French utopian socialism is evident and Kats became particularly impressed with the London Working Men’s Association and the Chartist movement. None other than Lucien Jottrand encouraged Kats to organise ‘meetings’ – he used the English word – in order to create political awareness and to make workers familiar with socioeconomic themes and debates.<sup>45</sup> From the outset, he gained the financial support

<sup>38</sup> J. Willequet, *La Vie Tumultueuse de l'Abbé Helsen, 1791–1842: Un Schisme Libéral et Proletarien à Bruxelles* (Brussels: Parthenon, 1956), pp. 145–60.

<sup>39</sup> *Woorden van een eenen Geloovige* was a translation by A. Precelle, a follower of the schismatic priest Charles-Henri Helsen. J. Kuypers, *Jacob Kats: Agitator* (Brussels: De Wilde Roos, 1930), p. 21.

<sup>40</sup> Buonarroti, *Conspiration*, p. 296.

<sup>41</sup> T. Juste, ‘Louis De Potter’ in *Biographie Nationale*, vol. V, pp. 620–30.

<sup>42</sup> Stedman Jones, ‘Origins of socialism’, pp. 171–89. <sup>43</sup> Kuypers, *Jacob Kats*, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> J. Kats, *Het aerdsch Parady's of den Zegepraël der Broederliefde, Zedelyk Tooneelspel met Sang in twee Bedryven* (Antwerp: H. Ratinkx, 1836).

<sup>45</sup> *Courrier Belge*, 5 January 1836. Jottrand published a summary of all the meetings of the London Working Men’s Association in 1836. L. Jottrand, *L'Association du Peuple de la*

of Jottrand and two 'radical' members of parliament, Alexandre Gendebien and Jean Le Hardy de Beaulieu. Gendebien had briefly housed Etienne Cabet in 1834 prior to the latter's move to London.<sup>46</sup> The meetings were, however, first and foremost another front organisation of the *Panadelfie* and therefore particularly Babouvist in inspiration. Alongside these meetings came the founding of a periodical entitled *Den Waren Volksvriend* (The True Friend of the People), which was published between 1836 and 1840. In one of his articles, a failed attempt to assassinate the French king, Louis-Philippe I, was justified by Kats: 'an act of which many examples exist in Greek and Roman history' (tyrannicide).<sup>47</sup> Adolphe Bartels was appalled and openly attacked Kats and Jottrand. Publicly, the organisation manifested itself with a series of seemingly inoffensive petitions for the right to sit in covered train wagons or the import of cheaper British coal (1837).<sup>48</sup> The minister of the interior wanted Kats muzzled and all his meetings were infiltrated by the secret services and his articles screened for press infringements. A proposed law on theatre censorship in 1836 referred to Kats' activities. Kats immediately responded in an open letter, denying all accusations of instigating social unrest, while ferociously defending the constitution.<sup>49</sup> Kats became subsequently involved with the working-class movement in Ghent and took part in the weavers' revolt, which was the only act of workers resistance in the first half of the nineteenth century that sent shockwaves throughout the country. His appeal and authority among the workers was unrivalled. As a worker-intellectual Kats appeared like an advocate of 'bourgeois' taste and values. He tactically and effectively appropriated some of the core values of the Belgian bourgeoisie. At least outwardly, emancipation meant upward social mobility as a means to challenge the strict boundaries that existed between the social groups that were spawned by the revolution. In an article, written in 1836, Kats claimed that the meetings were about 'the right to be considered more than merely scum. To be considered by all right-thinking people, as well-behaved and valuable members of society that need not be in want of the

*Grande-Bretagne et de l'Irlande, au 6 août 1838, Proposée pour Modèle au Peuple Belge* (Brussels: Leroux, 1838), p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> J. Kuypers, 'Utopia in Vlaanderen', *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde, 1952–1953*, 18–19.

<sup>47</sup> Kats thus echoed Feargus O'Connor's comments on 'the virtues of tyrannicide', during a Chartist demonstration in Bradford on 18 October 1838. M. Hovell, *The Chartist Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1918), p. 119.

<sup>48</sup> Kuypers, *Jacob Kats*, pp. 36–47.

<sup>49</sup> B. Delbecke, *De lange Schaduw van de Grondwetgever: Perswetgeving en Persmisdrijven in België, 1831–1914* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2012), pp. 136–37.

necessaries of life'.<sup>50</sup> In an enthusiastic review of one of his plays, Lucien Jottrand stressed, 'This man is perfectly comfortable as a worker and happy with the wage he receives.'<sup>51</sup> The order and discipline that reigned during his plays and meetings deliberately mirrored the theatrics and dignity of parliamentary debates.

Jottrand supported Kats, but was probably unaware of his membership of the *Panadelfie*. Jottrand would occasionally lend his pen to *Le Radical* but always kept his distance from Babouvism and secret societies in general. Jottrand considered himself a Jacobin, of which 'Jesus was the instigator and Rousseau the theoretician'.<sup>52</sup> When tensions rose between liberals and Catholics following the episcopal condemnation of freemasonry in December 1837, Jottrand urged his readers not to take sides. Freemasonry had allowed the bourgeoisie to triumph and had thus sided with the main enemy to democracy. According to Jottrand, Belgium had a constitution similar to Britain's and now had to follow their example of 'legal and organised agitation' in order to bring about universal suffrage. As political tensions were gradually building up towards the ratification of the Treaty of London (1839), Jottrand tried to seize the opportunity by recasting the question of 'national sovereignty' in democratic terms: 'instead of leaving it to two exceptional categories: the clergy and freemasons'. It would only take a number of 'well-intentioned citizens' from Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels, and Liège, according to Jottrand, to organise a popular gathering in Brussels that would lay the groundwork for an association modelled, not only on the London Working Men's Association, but also the Irish association of O'Connell and the Political Union of Attwood.<sup>53</sup> Jottrand was not merely intent on circumventing the gradual disintegration of *Unionism* but desperately tried to supplant it with a democratic alternative.

When Kats found himself imprisoned in 1836 without any formal charges being pressed, it led to the first cross-channel, working-class exchange of some significance.<sup>54</sup> The *London Dispatch* gave an emotional account of the events and inspired the London Working Men's Association's rather lengthy 'Address to the Working Classes of Belgium'.<sup>55</sup> An 'Address from the Working Men of Belgium' was written in response and signed by artisans from Brussels and Ghent. The address

<sup>50</sup> H. Wouters, *Documenten Betreffende de Geschiedenis der Arbeidersbeweging, 1831-1853* (Leuven: Nauwelaerts, 1963), pp. 10-51.

<sup>51</sup> *Le Courrier Belge*, 8 March 1836. <sup>52</sup> Kuypers, *Égalitaires en Belgique*, pp. 46-61.

<sup>53</sup> Jottrand, *L'association du Peuple*, pp. 42-44. <sup>54</sup> Kuypers, *Jacob Kats*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>55</sup> H. Weisser, *British Working-Class Movements and Europe, 1815-1848* (Manchester University Press, 1975), pp. 67-68.



clearly shows the debt the meetings owed to the Chartists' focus on political power:

Following your example we must strive for: participation in legislative power, education paid for by the state with the money it keeps from our meagre wage.<sup>56</sup>

Both addresses were translated into French, German, and Dutch and published by the *Bund der Gerechten* (League of the Just) in Paris. It brought Kats some notoriety among French and German utopian socialist circles. Alexandre Delhasse followed Kats' example and after the death of Buonarroti in 1837, the first French meetings were held in Brussels.<sup>57</sup> Delhasse considered the Chartists the rightful heirs to Robespierre and Buonarroti.<sup>58</sup> When *Le Radical* sang its swan song in 1838, Alexandre Delhasse wrote what can be considered a eulogy for the *Panadelfie*. While maintaining a critique of liberal individualism and free competition, Delhasse maintained that equality, and its ensuing fraternity, could only be brought about by first reforming man and then the institutions. The cultivation of moral sentiment was taken as fundamental to democracy and was paired, in abstract terms, with an identification of political power as a source of social inequality.<sup>59</sup> In their public or propagandist activities the republican democrats mainly advocated universal suffrage, free education, the abolition of conscription, direct taxes on land ownership, and the nationalisation of banking and industry. All of this had to be achieved through gradual reform and emancipation, rather than revolutionary action.<sup>60</sup> At least outwardly, the different currents remained faithful to liberal principles while focusing on the principle of equality and social reform. The principle of equality was understood in wholly political terms and found its fullest expression in the demand for universal suffrage.

The 'social' merely referred to the exclusion that was inherent in the property-based representative political system. This critique of *not being represented* was compounded by the disregard for the 'common language' of the vast majority of the population in Flanders. This was a concern shared by all republican democrats, as exemplified in their support for Kats' activities, but at all times was wholly subservient to the much broader question of political emancipation. Advocating the use of the common language thus had little in common with the emergence of an ahistorical 'language cleavage' or romantic nationalism. Recent historical

<sup>56</sup> J. Kuypers, 'Het Vroegsocialisme tot 1850' in J. Dhondt (ed.), *Geschiedenis van de Socialistische Arbeidersbeweging* (Antwerp: Ontwikkeling, 1960), VI, p. 121; Kuypers, *Jacob Kats*, pp. 77–84.

<sup>57</sup> Kuypers, *Jacob Kats*, p. 86. <sup>58</sup> Kuypers, *Égalitaires en Belgique*, p. 89.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94. <sup>60</sup> Kuypers, *Jacob Kats*, p. 96.

sociolinguistic research has emphasised that Flanders had simply functioned in Dutch under William's regime.<sup>61</sup> Dutch had been used in politics, the administration, the judiciary, and education. An entire generation was influenced by the Dutch standard language and had, like Kats, benefited from William's educational policies. Even under the French regime, primary education in Flanders had been in Dutch, but 77 per cent of the children had not even attended primary school. William drastically improved this situation and had established pedagogical academies to provide primary and secondary schools with competent teachers. In 1829 a complete generation that had been educated in Dutch graduated from high school.<sup>62</sup> This is arguably the context in which the initial articulation of the 'language question' should be cast. It was a tool to elaborate on the necessity of 'education' in order to bring about constitutionally guaranteed equality. Buonarroti had obviously argued as much in his widely read history of the 'Conspiracy of the Equals':

The citizens' knowledge has to make them love equality, liberty and the fatherland, and prepare them to serve and protect it. It is therefore necessary, they [the insurrectionary committee] added, that every Frenchman can speak, read and write his language . . . It considered education the most solid foundation of social equality and the republic.<sup>63</sup>

What on the surface appears to be an early articulation of the 'language cleavage' thus owed more to the legacy of the eighteenth century, and enlightened despotism, than it could prefigure the romantic fantasies of the Flemish Movement. Discourses on language and religion allowed the republican democrats to elaborate on the 'social question' in wholly political terms. Working-class resistance, meanwhile, assumed a different form. Craftsmen relied on the long-standing corporatism of the guilds in order to circumvent the ban on workers' associations, which had been in place since Napoleon. The creation of special funds for pensions and social welfare allowed them some organisational structures, which were non-existent for unskilled factory workers. Societies of mutual aid in Ghent led the way while typographers were the first in Brussels to organise themselves along corporatist lines in 1842, followed by tailors and bronze workers. Most of these craftsmen were literate and made up the majority of the workforce in Brussels. In 1846 the number of

<sup>61</sup> For an overview see R. Vosters and J. Weijermars, *Taal, Cultuurbeleid en Natievorming onder Willem I* (Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie, 2011).

<sup>62</sup> R. Willemyns, *Dutch: Biography of a Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 112–13.

<sup>63</sup> Buonarroti, *Conspiracy*, pp. 287–88.

workers amounted to 49 per cent of the population, but less than 8 per cent of them were employed in companies with more than forty workers and only 4 per cent were industrial workers. The crafts in the capital reflected the needs of the rising bourgeoisie: bakers, tailors, shoemakers, leatherworkers, hat makers, carpenters, and construction workers all worked for the local market. The total population of Brussels rose from around 100,000 inhabitants in 1830 to 200,000 in 1856.<sup>64</sup> The activities of Jottrand, Bartels, and Kats were therefore focused on Brussels and attempts to spread their ideas all over the country only met with some success in Ghent.

Kats furthered his reputation by the aforementioned resistance to the Treaty of London. In 1840 a group of students of the Université Libre de Bruxelles attended one of his meetings. Among them were Victor Tedesco and Philippe Gigot, who would be of some help to Marx in setting up the *Communist Correspondence Committee* in 1846.<sup>65</sup> Resistance to the Treaty of London also brought Kats closer to Adolphe Bartels, who had always resented Kats' adherence to Babouvist ideas on 'a community of goods'. The fight for the integrity of the nation's territory – and an increase in the public debt – brought them together.<sup>66</sup> One of Kats' meetings in Ghent was the start of the cotton revolt in September 1839, the *Troubles de Gand*, as the government called it. This revolt was a reaction against the cotton crisis of the 1830s, which led to mass unemployment and famine. The crisis coincided with a plea from the industry for specific forms of intervention. The state had to liberalise the policy on grain prices and to promote exports, while leaving its execution and control in the hands of the industry. Although it has been claimed that the cotton revolt managed to exercise political pressure, which eventually led to a breach in agrarian protectionism,<sup>67</sup> it is more than likely that the demands of the workers simply played into the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie's struggle against the landed aristocracy. Kats' role in the cotton revolt was widely covered in the press and after another spell in prison, *De Volksvriend* finally had to cease publication in 1840.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> J. Kruithof, 'De samenstelling van de Brusselse bevolking in 1842', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Wetenschappen*, I (1956), 159–221.

<sup>65</sup> R. Kern, *Victor Tedesco, ein früherer Gefährte von Karl Marx in Belgien* (Münster: Waxmann, 2014), p. 117.

<sup>66</sup> A. Boland, *Le Procès de la Révolution Belge: Adolphe Bartels (1802–1862)* (Namur: Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1977), p. 194.

<sup>67</sup> A book-length study has been dedicated to the 'Troubles de Gand', G. Deneckere, *Het Katoenoproer in Gent in 1839* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1999).

<sup>68</sup> B. Delbecke, *De Lange Schaduw van de Grondwetgever: Perswetgeving en Persmisdrijven in België, 1831–1914* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2012), p. 140.

Meetings would continue to be organised and were hotly debated in industrial islands all over Flanders.<sup>69</sup>

#### IV The Subsistence Crisis of the 1840s and the Rise of 'Early Socialism'

Domestic industry and agriculture were the economic backbone of a densely populated Flanders in the early 1840s. The countryside was dotted with smallholdings that were often less than 0.5 hectares in size. Dividing up the land and driving up lease rates reaped huge benefits for landowners, while peasants had to supplement their meagre income through the domestic linen industry, which had already lost most of its markets by the end of the 1830s. At that time already 20 per cent of the population was registered as indigent. The subsistence crisis of 1845–50 was caused by the failure of potato harvests and further worsened by agrarian protectionism, embodied in the sliding scale system, which had been introduced with a large majority in parliament in 1834. Prices of potatoes and grain almost tripled. The subsistence crisis of 1845–47 coincided with a deepening crisis of the rural flax industry. In less than a century, real wages had declined by a staggering 75 per cent in 1850. The provinces of East (Ghent) and West Flanders (Bruges) were hit particularly hard. Excess mortality rose to around 15,000, or more than 40 per cent above the average mortality rate of the population.<sup>70</sup>

The crisis brought a new generation of early socialists to the forefront. Like Jacob Kats, by 1844, they had been influenced by Blanquism. Inspired by French examples, *Volksmaatschappijen* (popular societies) were set up in Brussels around 1843. The *Volksmaatschappij van Agneessens* counted Kats among its members, but the younger generation increasingly criticised his attempts to remain scrupulously within the boundaries of the law.<sup>71</sup> While Kats had been a member of *L'Alliance*, the members of the *Volksmaatschappij van Agneessens* kept their distance in 1845.<sup>72</sup> In 1844 Kats published the *Belgischen Volksalmanak voor het Schrikkeljaer 1844* (Belgian People's Almanak for the Leap Year 1844), later on translated into French, which contained the *Katechismus over de armoede van het volk* (Catechism on the Poverty of the People). It was

<sup>69</sup> J. Kats, *Antwoord op een Naemloos Lasterschrift tegen de Meetings of Volksvergaderingen in België* (Brussels: Dehou, 1840).

<sup>70</sup> E. Vanhaute, "So worthy an example to Ireland". The subsistence and industrial crisis of 1845–1850 in Flanders' in R. Paping, E. Vanhaute, and C. O'Grada (eds.), *When the Potato Failed. Causes and Effects of the Last European Subsistence Crisis, 1845–1850* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp.123–48.

<sup>71</sup> Kuypers, 'Het vroegsocialisme tot 1850', VI, 177.

<sup>72</sup> Boland, *Adolphe Bartels*, p. 250.

preceded by a clear reference to the crisis in Flanders.<sup>73</sup> The catechism contained a series of 'lessons', considering workers 'the most useful members of society' and focusing in particular on the role of parliament, ministers, and the king in Belgian society. Another lesson blamed the 'ignorance' of the workers for their predicament. The catechism hailed the freedom of the press as inscribed in the constitution but also warned against the attempts of the church to muzzle it. The main tools to eradicate poverty were thus already inscribed in the constitution: freedom of the press and of association. Both would eventually help to 'enlighten' the people and bring about constitutionally guaranteed equality. The state, rather than the church, would have the obligation to care for the unemployed, the elderly, and to organise free education. This was to be funded by taxing the rich, whose possessions could be confiscated in case of refusal. Another important lesson pertained to the spread of mechanisation, which was to be promoted as much as possible since it could make the work easier and limit the working day. Following the ideas of Louis Blanc, which were also gaining currency at the time, this had to happen by fully nationalising industry. Kats also advocated free trade as the way to lower prices on consumer goods and services. All this, of course, went hand in hand with the demand for universal suffrage and the establishment of 'popular assemblies' (*volksvergaderingen*) all over the country.<sup>74</sup>

Kats continued to organise his meetings and plays, but after the death of a police commissioner at one of them, he was eventually forced to leave Brussels for Molenbeek. At around 1845 the activities of his Fraternal Society included a *Sociëtyt voor het Volksonderwys* (People's Education Society) and the organisation of democratic banquets. Local typographers held their meetings in the same premises and the 'apostle' Jean Journet delivered a series of lectures on Fourierism.<sup>75</sup> One of the younger generations of early socialists was Kats' son-in-law, Jan Pellerin, a bootmaker from Brussels who had also received his schooling under the Dutch regime. Pellerin was an early member of the meetings and soon received a reputation as an inspired and combative orator. He published a notorious early socialist pamphlet in 1845: *Wat men is en wat men worden kan* (What One Is and Can Become). The pamphlet adds further proof to the crucial and enduring impact of Lamennais, and his German disciple Wilhelm Weitling, on early socialism in Belgium. Weitling's *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte* (1838–39) had

<sup>73</sup> J. Kats, *Belgischen Volks Almanak voor het Schrikkeljaer 1844* (Brussels: Van Marré, 1844), p. 12.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124–34. <sup>75</sup> Kuypers, *Jacob Kats*, pp. 108–10, 120–23.

given the Paris-based *League of the Just* its official and 'revolutionary' programme. The overall tone of Pellerin was therefore remarkably more dramatic than that of Kats, and has become widely considered representative of the 'Spirit of 1848'.<sup>76</sup> For all the romanticism and prophetic posturing, there was no vestige of an actual social or political theory of revolution and societal change. The members of the *Volksmaatschappij* were all craftsmen: locksmiths, bookbinders, shoemakers, lithographers, and tailors. The ministry of justice claimed: 'The Agneessens are all uneducated, they have no influential leadership.'<sup>77</sup> In 1844 another veteran of the Revolution of 1830, Adolphe Bartels, joined their ranks. He had become radicalised in the 1830s and had written a Blanc-inspired pamphlet in 1842 entitled *Essai sur l'organisation du travail* in which he advocated the nationalisation of all industry and lands through a social fund. The so-called 'organisation of labour' would thus entail more than the mere founding of social workshops under state control that could lower prices by increased competition. Property would be solely based on individual merit and hierarchically organised corporations would exist within nationalised sectors. Bartels founded the journal *Le Débat Social* in 1844 and published a series of articles in *Le Patriote Belge* on how capital, labour, and individual talent could be merged into a new whole. The egalitarian doctrines of Babeuf were still counter to his belief in individual freedom and his preference for a dictatorship was far too undemocratic. All of Bartels' writings were, moreover, larded with pious Catholicism. Bartels soon became somewhat of a liability in the eyes of other 'radicals', like the brothers Delhasse, who feared that his unremitting critique of Charles Rogier would jeopardise their position in *L'Alliance*. When the *Agneessens* took their distance from *L'Alliance* in June 1845, Bartels completely withdrew from *Le Débat Social*.<sup>78</sup>

With the deepening crisis in Flanders, *Volksmaatschappijen* began to emerge in the provinces of East and West Flanders. The driving force was Jean-Louis Labiaux, a former schoolteacher, who wrote the *Adres aen de verschillende klassen der maatschappij* (Address to the Different Classes of Society, 1843) in which he blamed the 'lack of interest in state affairs' on the 'incapacity of the workers to make full use of the rights and liberties as inscribed in the constitution'. A second address was published in March 1844 in both French and Dutch. It was immediately seized but nonetheless picked up by the French democratic press. Political reform was subordinate to immediate action, but the overall tone

<sup>76</sup> Kuypers, *Het vroegsocialisme tot 1850*, VI, p. 180. <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>78</sup> For an overview of Bartels see, Boland, *Adolphe Bartels*.

was melodramatic and amounted to nothing more than a Louis Blanc-inspired plea for the 'right to work' and lower taxes. The most important *Volksmaatschappij* outside of Brussels was organised in Ghent by Labiaux himself. Its meetings attracted no more than thirty or fifty participants. Labiaux received some notoriety with an attempt to organise a – Chartist-inspired – 'Hunger March' on Brussels in 1846. Pellerin and Bartels joined in and attempted to bring middle-class intellectuals around the table to discuss measures that could help the languishing linen industry. The government considered it a dangerous republican plot and all those involved were arrested.<sup>79</sup> The failed march managed to draw some attention to the deepening crisis in Flanders, however, which could no longer be ignored.<sup>80</sup>

In 1847 the first all-liberal government, headed by Charles Rogier, rose to power. It brought some relief for crisis-ridden Flanders, but left most progressive liberals and so-called 'radicals' disappointed. Both groups had gathered around *Le Débat Social* (1844–49) but neither of them was eventually part of the government. Anti-clericalism obviously dominated the liberal agenda, but the liberal party programme of 1846 did contain a rather vague article on the 'necessary improvement of the condition of the indigent and working class'.<sup>81</sup> It was meant to appease the progressive wing of the party, but none of these progressive liberals managed to offer a coherent analysis or critique of the economy either. The so-called 'deficiencies' of liberal economic policy were univocally blamed on the 'thirst for profit', which had to be mediated through vague corporatist policies. Saint-Simonism and especially Fourierism were met with some enthusiasm. Alexandre Delhasse took an interest in some of Fourier's economic ideas, but was appalled by the funding of *phalanstères* through savings and inheritances. Bartels found himself unable to reconcile his own Catholicism with Fourier's ideas on free love and other 'eccentricities'.<sup>82</sup>

In the 1840s a group of Fourierists had been active in Belgium and found some appeal among the bourgeoisie and the nobility. Zoé Gatti de Gammond had published a summary of Fourier's ideas in 1838 and even some *phalanstères* had been set up. Victor Considerant spread Fourierism further in the 1840s by delivering a series of lectures all over the

<sup>79</sup> G. Deneckere, *Sire, het volk mort: Sociaal Protest in België, 1831–1918* (Antwerp: Hadewijch, 1997), pp. 117–18.

<sup>80</sup> Dr Mareska, 'Situation sanitaire de la population en Flandre', *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Médecine* (Brussels, 1850), 513–17.

<sup>81</sup> Gubin and Nandrin, *Het liberale en burgerlijke België*, pp. 256–75.

<sup>82</sup> Ghijsens, *Aanzetten tot sociale politiek*, pp. 421–59.



country.<sup>83</sup> In the 1830s Considerant had befriended Charles Rogier and they were on speaking terms until the Revolutions of 1848 soured their relationship.<sup>84</sup> Some of the most original socialist theorists of the 1830s and 1840s in Belgium had only limited appeal among the early socialists and progressive liberals. Chief among them were Hypollite Colins de Ham, François Huet, and Joseph Charlier. Colins de Ham advocated the collectivisation of land and capital while considering private property the necessary stimulus to work. François Huet was a Frenchman who taught philosophy at the University of Ghent and spread his Christian socialist ideas through the *Société Huet*, which was founded in 1846, at the height of the subsistence crisis in Flanders. In 1850 Huet was eventually forced to resign over his republican sympathies by Charles Rogier. Colins de Ham influenced Louis de Potter and the *Société Huet* counted a number of future liberal and socialist politicians among its members. He also inspired the collectivist ideas of César De Paepe, one of the leading members of the First International in 1864.<sup>85</sup> De Paepe, born in 1842, would claim in the 1860s that he had gone from the ‘absolute communism of Babeuf’ to Saint-Simonism, then Fourierism, and eventually adopted the ideas of Proudhon, while maintaining an interest in Colins de Ham and de Potter.<sup>86</sup>

In stark contrast to their progressive and socialist counterparts, the traditional liberals of the 1840s had a somewhat more robust economic theoretical background. Many members of the first all-liberal government in 1847 had followed the courses of Dutch economist Jan Ackersdijck at the University of Liège in the 1820s. In 1825 the Dutch government had failed in persuading Jean-Baptiste Say to take the chair of political economics. Ackersdijck was a disciple of Say, advocated free trade, and opposed protectionism in any form.<sup>87</sup> Most Belgian political economists would continue to work along the lines of their French colleagues and mainly spread their doctrines without contributing to them.<sup>88</sup> Like Say, who had abandoned his initial republican preoccupations, they

<sup>83</sup> J. Beecher, *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (University of California Press, 2001), p. 113.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269–70.

<sup>85</sup> M. Van Dijk, *De wetenschap van de wetgever: De klassieke politieke economie en het Belgische landbouwbeleid, 1830–1884* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2008), pp. 70–71.

<sup>86</sup> J. Bartier, *Naissance du Socialisme en Belgique: Les Saint-Simoniens* (Brussels: PAC, 1985), pp. 137–38.

<sup>87</sup> P. Harsin, ‘L’enseignement de l’économie politique et de la statistique à l’université de Liège de 1820 à 1830’. *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques de l’Académie Royale de Belgique* (1966), pp. 5, 52, 307–23.

<sup>88</sup> Van Dijk, *De wetenschap van de wetgever*, pp. 50–52.

approached political economics as if it was essentially independent of political organisation.<sup>89</sup>

Around 1846 a group of economists around Charles de Brouckère rose to prominence amid rising tensions between progressive and traditional liberals over the ongoing subsistence crisis. Cobden's *Anti-Corn Law League* inspired the foundation of their *Association Belge pour la Liberté Commerciale*. In September 1847 it even organised an international congress in Brussels. Although most of the participants were Belgian political economists, who were more like bystanders than actual participants, it was arguably the first truly European meeting of its kind.<sup>90</sup> Marx and Engels, together with other members of the Communist League and the *Association Démocratique*, attended the congress. Marx was scheduled to speak but the organisers eventually refused to give him the floor.

The congress was presided over by de Brouckère, who had been a member of the constitutional committee in 1830 and the National Congress. He had brief spells as minister of the interior, war, and finance in 1831 and eventually became the first professor of political economics at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, founded by freemasons in 1834. In 1851 he published the very first handbook on political economy in Belgium. It is, however, especially revealing that de Brouckère was the mayor of Brussels during the Revolutions of 1848. Another leading member of the *Association Belge pour la Liberté Commerciale* was the lawyer Victor Faider, who was also part of the *Association Démocratique de Bruxelles*, founded in 1847.<sup>91</sup>

The *Association Démocratique* famously had Karl Marx as one of its vice presidents. The inevitable Lucien Jottrand was elected president. The statutes were signed by sixty members, chief among the foreigners were German immigrants. They had gathered in Brussels around the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung* (1847–48). Marx arrived in Brussels in February 1845 and Engels would join him briefly a couple of months later. The German exile, and former Carbonarist, Maynz introduced him to Philippe Gigot, Lucien Jottrand, Victor Faider, Bartels, and Kats. The Belgian democrats and 'radicals' were obviously of little interest to him.<sup>92</sup> The impact of Proudhon, not to mention Marx's critique, on the working-class movement in Belgium was extremely limited. His ideas

<sup>89</sup> G. Stedman Jones, *An End to Poverty?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 110–11.

<sup>90</sup> G. Erreygers, 'Economic associations in Belgium' in M. Augello (ed.), *The Spread of Political Economy and the Professionalisation of Economists* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 91–108.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>92</sup> Kern, *Tedesco*, p. 302.

would only play a major role from the 1860s onwards.<sup>93</sup> His German contemporary Karl Grün, who had visited Brussels during a study trip through Belgium and France, may have introduced his ideas among members of Kats' Fraternal Society. The German poet Ferdinand Freiligrath had introduced Kats to Grün in October 1844, who would write favourably about him as the 'Flemish socialist and Brabantian O'Connell'.<sup>94</sup> His overall judgement of Belgian socialism, however, left little to the imagination: 'No country is probably less influenced by theoretical socialism than Belgium' and 'no country is less state-aware; the state has been completely dissolved into bourgeois society'.<sup>95</sup> Weitling came to Brussels in January 1846 and had a famous argument with Marx during a meeting of the *Communist Correspondence Committee*. He had some influence among the German immigrants of the city but it had waned by the time the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung* started publication in 1847.<sup>96</sup> This puts the *Association Démocratique* in perspective. Marx was only mildly interested in the Belgian social and democratic movements. While Jottrand proudly announced that Marx had gone to London to represent the *Association* among the Fraternal Democrats, in reality he had gone firmly to establish his leading position among the *Communist League*. A distorted version of the speeches Marx had given in London was published in *Le Débat Social*. Marx mainly advocated the Chartist demand for universal suffrage and they would consequently be hailed as the 'saviours of the human race'.<sup>97</sup> An increasing number of xenophobic articles were immediately directed at the immigrant population of Brussels. Adolphe Bartels wrote in *Le Journal de Charleroi* that he was appalled by 'foreigners who tried to lecture' him. Marx subsequently labelled him a 'theocrat rather than a democrat'.<sup>98</sup> The *Association Démocratique* was a huge success and managed to attract democratic movements from all over the country. On 8 January 1848 Marx finally delivered his speech on free trade, originally scheduled for the Congress of September 1847, to the *Association Démocratique*.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>93</sup> J. Moulaert, *Rood en Zwart: De Anarchistische Beweging in België* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1995), pp. 27–28.

<sup>94</sup> Kuypers, *Het vroegsocialisme tot 1850*, VI, p. 176.

<sup>95</sup> K. Grün, *Die soziale Bewegung in Frankreich und Belgien, Briefe und Studien* (Darmstadt: Leske, 1845), p. 76.

<sup>96</sup> L. Somerhausen, *L'Humanisme Agissant de Karl Marx* (Brussels: Richard Masse, 1946), pp. 129–30.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187. <sup>98</sup> *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung*, 19 December 1847.

<sup>99</sup> Marx, 'Speech on the Question of Free Trade', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975–2004) [subsequently *MECW*], vol. VI, p. 465.

Labiaux reacted with wild enthusiasm and immediately proposed that the speech be published in French and Dutch. Jottrand was, however, not impressed and tried to keep the speech under wraps in *Le Débat Social*. The Association would speak out in favour of free trade, but on grounds quite different from Marx's. A meeting of the *Association Démocratique* was staged in Ghent and drew no less than two thousand participants. Meanwhile, the Prussian government had put pressure on Belgium to have Marx expelled. Jottrand deemed it nonetheless necessary to attack Marx anonymously in *Le Débat Social* on 6 February. Marx responded with an article in the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung*, which is in many respects revealing as to what the 'Spirit of 1848' actually meant in Belgium. Jottrand wanted the *Association Démocratique* to appear 'respectable' to the Belgian liberals, whose support he so desperately craved. Among these liberals were many Catholics while, as Marx was so keen to point out, the Catholic newspapers in Flanders were standing shoulder to shoulder with the liberal establishment, in their opposition to the *Association Démocratique*. Jottrand stressed that the Belgians were merely asking for political reforms through democratic associations and contrasted this position with 'those utopias pursued by some democrats in countries where the social institutions permit no hope of any effective reforms, where it is therefore just as reasonable to think of castles in the air as of the modest well-being of the already free nations'. Such an invitation to settle scores was obviously too inviting to turn down. Marx scorned this alleged modest well-being and asked whether it also pertained to the 'destitution in Flanders'. The Belgian democrats themselves were in fact utopians, for they 'separate political forms from their social foundation', in believing that the 'political constitution of North America could ever be introduced in Europe without great social upheavals'. This must have struck a nerve with Jottrand, especially after he related it to his earlier opposition to Marx's speech on free trade. Jottrand had stressed that the *Association* had only asserted principles that 'would not have been out of place at the famous conference of economists held in Brussels in September last'.<sup>100</sup> Free trade was consequently considered a goal of democracy. Marx described the contribution of the Belgian democrats to these debates in a biting comment on an article by Jean Le Hardy de Beaulieu: 'scraped together from the most decayed leavings of the English free-trade cookshop. And to round off, Cobden is glorified'.<sup>101</sup> Marx's criticism lays bare the extent to which the Belgian democrats strove to

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>101</sup> Marx, 'The Débat Social of 6 February on the Democratic Association', *MECW*, vol. 6, pp. 537–39.

remain within the realms of Belgian liberalism on the eve of the revolutionary events that took place in Paris in February 1848.

## V The 'Absence of Spirit'

News about the events in Paris arrived in Brussels during the night of 25 February and two days later the *Association Démocratique* held a meeting. Many of its participants were arrested afterwards and Marx soon received a note of expulsion. The rumour spread that Leopold I had informed Lucien Jottrand of his intention to abdicate. Meanwhile the reserves were called in from all over the country and were concentrated in and around Brussels.<sup>102</sup> Victor Considerant, who was in Liège at the time, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Charles Rogier and urged him to ask the king to abdicate.<sup>103</sup> Rogier, of course, kindly declined the offer. Considerant's conference in the Masonic lodge of Liège coincided with the events of February 1848. The lodge had become radicalised in the 1840s when it began to discuss the right to equality, electoral reform, and the right to insurrection. In a speech before his lodge in Liège, Victor Tedesco expressed his high hopes for the revolution in Paris: 'If the people triumph, a nation, well instructed and fully convinced that capital dominates society and is the enemy of all liberties, will hopefully exercise its rights and give us an example of a democratic organisation that satisfies all the needs of the proletarians.' Tedesco also revealed that he planned to write a 'republican catechism', which would give the lodge an instrument to spread its democratic and republican ideas throughout the country.<sup>104</sup>

Meanwhile the first all-liberal government in Belgium was quick to swear allegiance to the king, in order to see off a possible French military invasion. Rogier tried to appease the progressive liberals by lowering the property requirement for voting and abolishing the stamp tax. It brought a dozen of small democratic journals into existence but they were all short-lived. The electorate, however, by with 50 per cent, assuring a striking liberal victory at the parliamentary elections of June 1848. This further isolated what was left of the republican democrats. None of them had of course been at any point interested in an armed uprising and most were in fact weary of French annexation. The government, to deter a potentially dangerous increase

<sup>102</sup> Bertrand, *L'histoire de la Démocratie*, pp. 300–11.

<sup>103</sup> G.-H. Dumont, *Le Miracle Belge de 1848* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2005), pp. 27–28.

<sup>104</sup> J. Leton, *Liège. Loges et Chapitres du XVIIIe au XXe Siècles* (Liège: Souverain, 1985), pp. 154–59.

in unemployment, floated a loan and imposed other special economic measures.<sup>105</sup>

The only 'threat' came from the tragi-comical 'Belgian Legion'. When the revolution broke out in Paris, immigrants were among the first dismissed. Large bands of impoverished Belgian workers roamed the streets and were promised foodstuffs by French republicans if they joined the legion. Around two thousand of them eventually crossed the border and were pushed back at Risquons-Tout by the Belgian infantry in less than two hours. Ghent was the only city where mass rioting did break out. Kats and Pellerin had successfully spread republican propaganda but their demonstrations soon brought royalist counter-actions on the streets. These counter-manifestations were often organised by Flemish activists and accompanied by anti-French songs.<sup>106</sup> One of the leading members of the early 'Flemish Movement', Baron de Saint-Genois, a professor at the University of Ghent, wrote a brochure entitled *Wat zullen wij worden?* (What shall we become?) in March 1848. The title of course referred to Jan Pellerin's pamphlet of 1845, which was in turn inspired by Weitling. The baron dismissed the republican democrats as 'those who want to become French', chief among them 'Fourierists, communists and Saint-Simonians, dreamers of all kinds' and opposed them to 'the Flemish movement, who in these troubled times of fear and uncertainty were the strongest section of the Belgian nation'.<sup>107</sup> The pacification that eventually took place in Ghent in 1848 thus prefigures the way in which the so-called 'language cleavage' would channel and neutralise political and social divides within the boundaries of the nation state. The liberal government emerged victorious from the 'miracle' of 1848. The solidarity among the social-conservative forces was tightened through a constitution that had allegedly proven the soundness of the parliamentary regime. The conservative powers all over Europe looked on in admiration at a monarchy that had strengthened its position in the wake of the revolutionary events. In the eyes of the ruling elites, Belgium had established itself as a nation state and the long period of consolidation that was inaugurated by the Belgian Revolution had finally come to an end.<sup>108</sup> The repression came down hard on what was left of the republican democrat movement. Victor Tedesco, Labiaux, Pellerin, and Kats were all arrested and their premises thoroughly searched. Among the items seized at the home of Kats was a curious document entitled *Project van eene Nieuwe Maetschappelijke Grondwet* (Project

<sup>105</sup> Gubin and Nandrin, *Het liberale en burgerlijke België*, pp. 252–54.

<sup>106</sup> Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen, *Political History*, pp. 54–55.

<sup>107</sup> [Jules Baron de Saint-Genois] *Wat zullen wij worden?* (Ghent, 1848).

<sup>108</sup> Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen, *Political History*, p. 56.

of a New Constitution for Society). The text was firmly rooted in a conception of property as 'natural law' and advocated a form of basic income. Above all, the text bears testimony to the extent in which the egalitarian doctrines of Babeuf and Buonarroti still prevailed among the 'early socialists' in Belgium around 1848.<sup>109</sup>

Belgium not only proved immune to revolutionary models from abroad in 1848; the idea of revolutionary action was not even given any consideration. According to Louis Bertrand, the 'action phase' of early socialism started after 1848 and the 'proletariat wanted to govern for the sake of all'. Decrying the 'lack of organisation' of the working class in 1848 was, however, nothing more than a rallying cry with contemporary overtones. His influential study, *L'histoire de la Démocratie et du Socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830*, was written at a time when the Belgian Workers Party was trying to increase its popular base in the wake of the introduction of plural voting in 1893. The syndicalist branch of the party sought to take root among workers from lesser industries, thus drawing them closer to the party.<sup>110</sup> The 'Charter of Quaregnon' (1894) offered merely the sketch of anything remotely resembling a political programme and was therefore amended with Bertrand's study. It gave the party a 'mission statement', rooted in Belgian social history rather than theoretical discussions. If anything, the 'impotence' of early socialism in Belgium was rather the outcome of its immediate political actions than due to its alleged 'doctrinal character'. In a similar vein, it appears superfluous to claim that there was no change of consciousness, in the sense of 'a political redefinition of one's own (class) identity'.<sup>111</sup> This redefinition was simply confined by the boundaries of a strategic alliance with Belgian liberalism at large. The abstinence from revolution was thus from the outset inherent in early socialism and the republican democratic movement. Its main emphasis was upon exercising political pressure upon the existing institutions of Belgium's parliamentary democracy. The Belgian Revolution, moreover, had already been a successful exercise in restoration and renewal. It had brought about an uneasy compromise between liberals and Catholics and the erosion of an agricultural economy and early industrialisation. Conditions for this compromise were established as early as the 1820s and its benefits were eventually reaped by the

<sup>109</sup> G. Erreygers and J. Cunliffe, 'Basic income in 1848', *Basic Income Studies*, Vol 1, Issue 2, 3–4.

<sup>110</sup> W. De Ridder, *Loonsystemen, Arbeidsorganisatie en Arbeidsverhoudingen in de Belgische glas- en Textielnijverheid* (Brussels: VUB Press, 2010), pp. 78–79.

<sup>111</sup> H. Lademachter, 'Niederlande und Belgien: Bemerkungen zu den Ursachen revolutionärer Abstinenz', *Der europäischen Nordwesten* (Münster: Waxmann, 2001), p. 136.



traditional social elites in 1830–31. Their alignment around a common agenda marginalised republican liberals and liberal Catholics alike. When Belgian independence was anchored in international law in 1839, increased tensions over restoration and renewal, between liberals and Catholics, were given free rein. Meanwhile, the difference between republican liberals and liberal Catholics had become blurred as they both tried to side with the anti-clerical liberals in order to advance what had become a democratic-republican agenda. Early socialism, likewise, was actively developed within the fixed boundaries of liberal constitutionalism. This is exemplified in the way in which the ‘social question’ was eventually articulated and effectively suited the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie in their struggle against (agrarian) protectionism.

The inability of Belgian historiography to relate the non-events of 1848 to the political dynamics of early socialism and republicanism hints at what the legacy of 1848 really meant up to this day. These non-events were given historiographical footnotes that helped to reproduce the sociopolitical pacification strategies of the twentieth century that lay at the heart of its own theoretical presumptions. These strategies were never turned into an object of scrutiny, thus unwittingly providing further proof of the ‘Absence of Spirit’ in the Kingdom of Belgium.

The ramifications of the non-revolution of 1848 became similarly part of a taken-for-granted understanding of the prehistory of Belgian socialism. The republican democrat movement had failed in establishing itself as a political force in its own right, further discrediting the ‘political realm’ in its entirety. This was of course not so much due to the republican democrats’ inability to plunge Belgium into the theatrics of revolution, but quite the opposite. The ‘chaos’ of the failed revolution in France had brought to light that ‘political reforms were useless’ if they were not ‘preceded by lateral economic changes’. The Revolution of 1848 was considered a turning point, since it had brought to an end the ‘political metaphysics, mysticism and revolutionary illuminism’ and had therefore signalled the coming of a ‘positive and useful social science’.<sup>112</sup> From the 1850s and 1860s onwards, the ideological core of this new ‘social science’ would draw upon references to Comte and Proudhon. The different intellectual currents refrained from putting forward a programme of ‘religious reform’, but arguably sought to supplant Christianity with an entirely new religion: socialism.<sup>113</sup> In an unexpected way this relegation of politics to a subordinate position posed no threat to the ruling

<sup>112</sup> These views were held by a group of socialists and progressive liberals that paired positivism with Proudhonism. Between 1867 and 1872 they published a highly influential newspaper, *La Liberté*. Wils, *De Omweg van de Wetenschap*, p. 153.

<sup>113</sup> Stedman Jones, ‘Origins of socialism’, p. 174.

institutions and could in fact invest it with ideological legitimacy. This can be inferred from the way in which the difference between censitary [the property requirement for voting] and universal suffrage was eventually assessed in the wake of the French coup of 1851. It was no coincidence that the introduction of universal suffrage had led to the coup: reprehensible though it was, 'at least the censitary system gave priority to the economical over the political'. The underlying economical principle would have to be radicalised in order to allow the 'representation of labour through natural groupings'. This seems like a striking attempt to prevent further social upheaval, through a 'scientific and responsible alternative to the unitary, authoritarian universal suffrage, the God-given universal suffrage'.<sup>114</sup> It opened up new possibilities for a strategic alliance between socialists and liberals, which would eventually forestall a debate on the *political* bearings of the 'social question' for decades to come. This debate would make its way into history as the 'social cleavage' and is covered in copious detail by the grand narrative of Belgium as a 'pacification democracy'. It seems as though the history of socialism in Belgium was quite suitably invested with 'social-scientific' respectability after all.

<sup>114</sup> 'Les deux politiques', *La Liberté*, 15 December 1867, as cited in Wils, *De Omweg van de Wetenschap*, 2005, p. 154.

## 9 German Republicans and Socialists in the Prelude to 1848

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*Douglas Moggach*

The category of post-Kantian perfectionism has recently been applied to ethical programmes like those of Fichte and Schiller, which, in the wake of Kant's critiques, take as their central end the promotion of freedom and of its material, political, and social conditions.<sup>1</sup> The post-Kantian character of these programmes derives from the shift away from *eudaimonia*, happiness, or need-fulfilment (typical of older perfectionisms since Aristotle and promulgated in the wake of Leibniz by his interpreter Christian Wolff)<sup>2</sup> to freedom and autonomy as core values. Perfectionist theories hold that the development of certain capabilities is of intrinsic, and supervening, ethical value.<sup>3</sup> For post-Kantian perfectionism, the aim is to secure and enhance the conditions for the exercise of freedom and to eliminate obstacles to self-determination. By validating actions through their contributions to these ends,<sup>4</sup> it is a consequentialist ethic that Kant himself would have rejected;<sup>5</sup> but its specificity consists in seeking to promote the capacity for free activity itself, rather than any determinate view of the requisites of a happy life, as earlier perfectionisms did.

The political theories of Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx in the 1840s represent distinct expressions of post-Kantian perfectionist ideas, though the turn from happiness to freedom occurs in differing degrees. It is much more marked in Bauer than in Marx, who combines Kantian and naturalist accounts of the self and its activity; yet it is definitive of Marx's

<sup>1</sup> D. Moggach, 'Freedom and perfection: German debates on the State in the Eighteenth century', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 42/4 (2009), 1003–23.

<sup>2</sup> C. Wolff, *Institutiones juris naturae et gentium. Gesammelte Werke* [1754] Bd. 26, M. Thomann (ed.) (Hildesheim: Olms, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> D. Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx. German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 185; here connecting Marx with perfectionism in general.

<sup>4</sup> Kant himself has been depicted as a perfectionist: P. Guyer, 'Kantian Perfectionism' in L. Jost and J. Wuerth (eds.), *Perfecting Virtue. New Essays on Kantian Ethics and Virtue Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 194–214. This theoretical issue cannot be addressed here.

<sup>5</sup> See the remarks on rational heteronomy in I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 110–11.

earliest conceptions of labour and emancipation. Idealist concepts of self-movement, of spontaneous or self-originated action, and the Kantian distinctions between empirical and pure practical reason, form the essential background to this thinking, even when, as in Marx, they are translated into a more materialist lexicon. The different understandings of these concepts and their normative implications underlie the political divergences between Hegel-inspired German republicanism and socialism in 1848.

The *Vormärz* period, the decade preceding the German Revolutions of March 1848, was a time of the flourishing and fracturing of the Hegelian School, which had formed immediately after Hegel's death in 1831. Rival parties emerged in the face of political repression and internal polemics.<sup>6</sup> The contentions among Hegelians in the *Vormärz* were intensely philosophical and intensely political. They involve a fundamental reworking of Hegelian themes, also drawing on Kant and Fichte, but further on Leibniz and older idealist traditions. The Hegelian School, especially the left tendency within it, appears in a new light when the scope of the investigation is broadened to encompass its relations to Hegel's precursors. Its proponents are no mere epigones of Hegel, but creative interpreters and critics of modern political and social conditions, who, in articulating rich concepts of activity and freedom, are participants in the great theoretical revolution initiated by German idealism. Bruno Bauer (1809–82), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72), and Karl Marx (1818–83) each make distinctive contributions to it.

Bruno Bauer has been described as 'Hegel's republican'.<sup>7</sup> It is he who, along with Arnold Ruge (1802–80),<sup>8</sup> develops Hegel's account of sovereignty as a defence of republicanism and revolution. The emergence of Bauer's ideas of republican freedom and the state can be traced in two phases of political criticism between May 1840 and April 1841. While his views continue to evolve, not unproblematically, throughout the *Vormärz*, the ideas that he defends during the revolutionary crisis of 1848–49 are consistent with these prior expressions. These early texts reveal not only Bauer's deepening political radicalisation, but also a fuller articulation of the theory of self-consciousness, which culminates in the *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts* (*The Trumpet of the Last Judgement*)

<sup>6</sup> D. Moggach (ed.), *Politics, Religion, and Art: Hegelian Debates* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> F. Beiser, 'Hegel's Republican,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 Sept. 2004 [review of D. Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)].

<sup>8</sup> On Ruge, see L. Calvié, 'Ruge and Marx: Democracy, Nationalism and Revolution in Left-Hegelian Debates' in Moggach, *Politics, Religion, and Art*, 301–20.

of August–October 1841.<sup>9</sup> First, in 1840, he designates the state the historical agent of emancipation and enlightenment. Secondly, in 1841, he examines the process of emancipation in the activities of the individual citizen, consciously enacting universal interests and repudiating traditional attachments and identities.

In his 1840 text, *Die evangelische Landeskirche Preußens und die Wissenschaft* (*The Evangelical National Church of Prussia and Science*), Bauer applies to the state a dialectic of the will, derived from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>10</sup> Hegel had there depicted the universal moment contained in any act of willing as equivalent to what Kant had called negative freedom, the capacity of the will not to be determined by any cause outside itself, but to be the sufficient ground of its own activity.<sup>11</sup> Hegel defines the universality of the will as the power to abstract from all given content, to assess its possibilities in the light of the evolving standards of reason, and to posit its contents anew, shaping its expressions in a constantly more adequate form.<sup>12</sup> In elaborating this idea in the *Landeskirche*, Bauer describes universality as a dynamic process of permanent transformation and historical progress. This power is now vested in the state: not the existing Prussian state, but the modern state in its essential tendency, the state as it ought to be.<sup>13</sup> The current crisis of the *Vormärz* signifies the breaking of the millennial alliance between throne and altar,<sup>14</sup> the symbiotic relationship in which the state sanctioned selected religious dogmas and institutions in exchange for ecclesiastical legitimisation and support. Once the political order is emancipated from the stultifying grip of religious authority, through the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and its German reception, the pure concept of the state emerges. The rational state is now within practical reach, and its theoretical outlines are clear: it is the source of ceaseless change and perfectibility, and hence genuinely universal. Everything merely given – traditional associations,

<sup>9</sup> B. Bauer [anon.], *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen. Ein Ultimatum* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841).

<sup>10</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, A. W. Wood (ed.), trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §5–§7. See M. Quante, “The Personality of the Will” as the Principle of Abstract Right,’ in R. B. Pippin and O. Höffe (eds.), *Hegel on Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 81–100.

<sup>11</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L.W. Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §5–§7.

<sup>13</sup> B. Bauer [anon., 1st ed.], *Die Evangelische Landeskirche Preußens und die Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1840), p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> W. Breckmann, ‘Politics, religion, and personhood: The left Hegelians and the Christian German state,’ in Moggach, *Politics, Religion, and Art*, 96–117; and in the same volume, C. Thornhill, ‘Hegelianism and the politics of contingency,’ 118–44.

identities, understandings of freedom – is absorbed in this negative process: all relations and institutions must prove their validity in the light of critical reason, which the state enacts. In its universality and transformative role, Bauer's state embodies the practice of enlightenment, in its Kantian definition:<sup>15</sup> the ubiquity of critique, the demand that all be justified in the court of reason, the repudiation of privileged positions that hold themselves exempt from critical scrutiny. The political order is in constant mutation. Its institutions are never fixed, but in flux, as the understanding of freedom grows. This flexibility is the essence of republican constitutionalism for Bauer in 1840. The state is:

the result of the struggle through which the purpose of morality, and its reality, are raised to a higher content, and the initially empty infinity has made itself into moral purpose and has attained legal recognition. The State is then again the reaction against the result, since after the resolution of the struggle it lets its pure infinitude appear again against the particular form of the result. It is immortal, eternal.<sup>16</sup>

The state's universality is precisely its not being determined by any particular interests or content and its ability to concretise itself in the forms of ethical life, but never to rest content with the realisation of freedom it has thus secured; the process of perfection is an infinite task. In relation to its citizens, the state has an educative function: to raise the indeterminateness of the particular consciousness to the knowledge of freedom and autonomy, while constantly reforming its own institutions as this knowledge deepens and grows.

In the second phase of his political critique, 'Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit' ('The Christian State and Our Time') of spring 1841, Bauer situates this capacity for universality primarily in the political activity of individual citizens of a republic, rather than in the state as an evolving institutional order; or rather, he now stresses not the formative relation of the state towards its members, but a more activist conception of citizenship.<sup>17</sup> It is no longer the state that reforms itself, but the citizens who constantly hold it, and one another, to account. What is now central to the practice of freedom is not only the fluidity of political institutions, but the moment of personal assent, the conscious, *individual* enactment of universal interests. The state must manifest rationality; but each citizen is also enjoined to participate consciously and personally in the process of

<sup>15</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, P. Guyer and A. Wood (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Bauer, *Landeskirche*, 107–8.

<sup>17</sup> B. Bauer, 'Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit', *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 7–12 June 1841, no 135–140, 537–58.

emancipation. For Bauer, unlike other left Hegelians like Feuerbach, universality is not a merely generic property, a property of the whole which individuals unselfconsciously share. Instead, it must be regarded by individuals as having normative status: the general will, the will that is universal but also one's own is given authoritative and directive status by individual assent. The dynamic, transformative self, realising rational freedom through its own, striving, is the Fichtean legacy which Bauer reclaims from Hegel.<sup>18</sup> The autonomy of this self is the principle of spontaneity or independent willing, disciplining itself under universal rules. Universal self-consciousness is the critical examination of particular interests in order to assess their compatibility with the demands of historical progress, and thus to test their admissibility, their fitness, and compossibility within a framework of post-Kantian perfectionism, where acts are validated by their contribution to the expanding space of freedom. Private interests are not immediately valid, but must be filtered, assessed, and admitted selectively according to rational rules.<sup>19</sup> Bauer here politicises Kantian autonomy,<sup>20</sup> situating it in the sphere of right from which Kant had extracted it,<sup>21</sup> and transposing it to the relations among citizens in the rational state: a state not yet achieved, but within sight in the revolutionary era. He invokes the vital Fichtean moment of 'positing', investing objectivity with the force of one's conscious will.<sup>22</sup> Hegel had already shown how the dialectic of the will culminates in the concept of singularity: the fusion of abstractive universality with concrete particularity, wherein the contents of the will are not merely given by arbitrary drives and inclinations, but self-determined. Bauer takes this singularity to be the essence of republican citizenship, a conclusion which leads him beyond Hegel's own constitutional horizon.<sup>23</sup> It is a richly philosophical conception.

<sup>18</sup> B. Bauer [anon.], 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs', *Wigands Vierteljahrschrift* III (1845), 86–146. Marx and Engels criticise this text in *The German Ideology*, K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975–2004) [subsequently *MECW*], vol. V, pp. 94–116.

<sup>19</sup> These considerations render at least comprehensible Bauer's problematic position on Jewish emancipation, which he takes as a claim that a given, particular identity possesses unchallengeable validity. B. Bauer, 'Die Judenfrage,' *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, 27 October to 4 November 1842, nos. 274–82, pp. 1093–1126. See D. Moggach, 'Republican rigorism and emancipation in Vormärz Germany' in D. Moggach (ed.) *The New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 114–35.

<sup>20</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, 108–13.

<sup>21</sup> I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. M. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 45–47.

<sup>22</sup> J. G. Fichte, P. Heath and J. Lachs (eds. and trans.), *Wissenschaftslehre* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970).

<sup>23</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, esp. §298–§314. See below, note 28.



It is also deeply political. The individuals whom Bauer invokes are those who are not constricted by a merely proprietary conception of freedom,<sup>24</sup> but who can rise to the ethical demands of republican freedom, to become active participants in the 'republic of self-consciousness'.<sup>25</sup> Bauer identifies religious particularism and liberal possessive individualism as forms of egoism; as particular interests or identities that stand opposed to progress, they are inconsistent with a new republican political order. The sectarian egoism he ascribes to Judaism and Christianity also characterises liberalism, which equates freedom with property, but it likewise typifies nascent socialism, which privileges a sectional class interest.<sup>26</sup> Bauer begins to develop a decade-long critique of the liberal and constitutionalist state, as well as of the Restoration monarchy: both are inadequate to the task of representing the universality of the will and consciousness. The liberal state subordinates political liberty to the demands of the market, and circumscribes the possibility of historical progress; its partisans' anxious clinging to their exclusive proprietary rights precludes them from making a decisive contribution to historic transformation.<sup>27</sup> The Restoration state too, seeking to defend irrational privileges, hierarchical statuses, and retrograde religious dogmas, is a crumbling bulwark against progressive change.<sup>28</sup> Bauer's theory of universal self-consciousness repudiates these positions in the name of perfectionist transformation.<sup>29</sup>

When, in 1848,<sup>30</sup> Bauer juxtaposes political to genuine emancipation, he is not merely echoing expressions used against him by his critics, like Karl Marx. He is amplifying, under the stimulus of criticism, views he had defended earlier in the 'Christliche Staat'. Merely political emancipation

<sup>24</sup> B. Bauer, *Geschichte der Politik, Kultur und Aufklärung des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Fortsetzung: Deutschland und die französische Revolution. Dritte Abteilung* (Charlottenberg: Egbert Bauer, 1845), 267ff.

<sup>25</sup> B. Bauer, 'Leiden und Freuden des theologischen Bewußtseins' in A. Ruge (ed.) *Anekdoten zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik*, 2 vols. (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843), vol. II, p. 111.

<sup>26</sup> B. Bauer, 'Die Gattung und die Masse', *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* X, September 1844, 42–48.

<sup>27</sup> B. Bauer, 'Die Septembertage 1792 und die ersten Kämpfe der Parteien der Republik in Frankreich,' 2. Abteilungen (Charlottenberg: Egbert Bauer, 1844), vol. I, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> See, inter alia, B. Bauer, 'Rezension: Einleitung in die Dogmengeschichte von Theodor Kliefoth', *Anekdoten* II, pp. 135–59. Bauer here also rebukes Hegel's own moderate constitutionalism, p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> On Bauer's idea of individuality and critiques of egoism, see J.E. Toews, *Hegelianism. The Path toward Dialectical Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 288–326.

<sup>30</sup> B. Bauer, 'Verteidigungsrede Bruno Bauers vor den Wahlmännern des Vierten Wahlbezirkes am 22.2. 1849' in P. Riemer and H.-M. Sass (eds.), E. Barnikol, *Bruno Bauer: Studien und Materialien* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1972), pp. 518–25.

corresponds to the notion of freedom expressed in the *Landeskirche*, where the state assumes the burden of the universal interest, but where the status of the citizens is unexamined: though the state is to elevate them to a higher ethical plane, the egoism they may display in their private transactions is not yet expressly thematised or criticised. Political emancipation of this kind is necessary but no longer sufficient to meet the demands of universal self-consciousness. The argument here is analogous to Marx's claim of the simultaneous genesis of citizen and bourgeois in the modern world, but for Bauer, the political realm, radically reconfigured, possesses resources essential to solving the problem. It is never merely dispensable, even if civil society is transformed. Bauer's views on the political transcendence of egoism, the necessity to overcome particularistic religious and political interests and identities, also clarify his highly contentious critique of Jewish emancipation, discussed elsewhere.<sup>31</sup>

The theoretical programme adumbrated in Bauer's political texts of the early *Vormärz* achieves its fullest expression in his anonymous publication of October 1841, *Die Posaune*. Because of the exigencies of censorship, he disguises his revolutionary message behind an ironic mask of pietistic denunciation. Bauer anonymously assumes the stance and the exhortatory language of a biblical prophet or of Luther, to condemn the ungodly Hegelian heretics who seek to overturn throne and altar. He gives a brilliant if tendentious depiction of the process of emancipation in what he describes as Hegel's relentless undermining of orthodox Christianity. The emergence of freedom consists in two distinct and irreducible moments. In the first moment, individuals are absorbed into their religious or political community (or, in more technical terms, into 'substance', a single, engulfing, self-sufficient entity in which they appear not as discrete independent actors, but as members or exemplars; their status is defined by their adherence to communal values and institutions, not by their own particular choices or desires). This substantiality relationship, displaying persons as accidents or parts of a collective, is characteristic of various historical periods: the predominant form in Greek antiquity, as Hegel had argued,<sup>32</sup> but also of medieval Christianity, properly understood. It even typifies the views of emancipation held by many of Bauer's left-Hegelian contemporaries, like Feuerbach, for whom communal membership is the decisive counterweight to the competitive divisions and alienations of the modern world. For Bauer too, this initial moment is essential, both historically and conceptually, but it is insufficient. Its importance lies

<sup>31</sup> See note 19. <sup>32</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §356.

in breaking the arbitrary self-will of isolated particulars and in establishing a sphere of general interests, which are acknowledged or shared by its members.

The second and decisive shift occurs in the dimension of singularity, where the universal is not merely a distributive property, but a personal acquisition: individuals consciously adopt the universal standpoint, or incorporate it as an aspect of their own selfhood, making their actions a vehicle for its further realisation. As in Hegel's account, the shift from *particularity* to *singularity* means that the universal is manifest as an aspect of the self, able to adjudicate its deeds and particular relations through rational critique and self-imposed norms. In the emancipatory programme of Hegel's *Phenomenology*,<sup>33</sup> substance becomes subject when the self posits universality as its own attribute. On Bauer's rendering, true singularity or individuality is autonomous, since it has overcome the fixity and rigidity of particular interests; in this politicisation of Kantian morality, the will is not determined by these interests, but determines them freely. Singularity recognises within itself a universal dimension, as the powers of critique and formative shaping of the external and the internal world. In the historical trajectory of self-consciousness, individuals, having first immersed themselves in substance, then emerge from it with the knowledge and discipline of rational freedom, subjecting their immediate interests to evaluative criticism, and repudiating their attachments to alienated or merely given forms of life, if the latter fail to meet rational standards.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to the inertness of substance,<sup>35</sup> Bauer's ethical idealism, echoing Fichte, is activist and personal: the accord of thought and being, the defining idealist project of bringing the objective world under the command of reason, is achieved through subjective activity, both shaping the self by critical reflection on one's own interests and goals, and transforming the institutional patterns of interaction among such liberated selves. It is not enough to *be* part of a rational community (as Bauer's *Landeskirche* had also seemed to imply), Citizens must consciously recognise and defend these values as their own; they must *posit* them, giving them reality in their own deeds. From the Stoics,<sup>36</sup> Bauer reactivates the essential moment of *synkatathesis* as definitive of

<sup>33</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (trans.) A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>34</sup> Moggach, *Bauer*, 40–46.

<sup>35</sup> B. Bauer, 'Rezension: *Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Kampf mit der modernen Wissenschaft*. von D.F. Strauss. 2 Bde. 1840–1841', *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, 25–28 January 1843, nos. 21–24, 82.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, M. L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (Brill, 1990), pp. 51–52; C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 185.

a moral act: the conscious assent from which action flows, the conscious willing of an end which endows an act with its moral quality. It is insufficient that the end be good: we must know it to be good and invest our will in it, if we are to be fully free and rational agents. From the perspective of this second moment of emancipation, the formal characteristics of the objective world, of the ethical bonds among individuals, and the institutions which express them, are revealed as the product of self-consciousness, of the creative work of individuals and their strivings for rational freedom. Ethical substance or collective life is infused with dynamism and subjective energy, sustained and changed by struggle and insight.<sup>37</sup>

Bauer had earlier defined autonomy as self-relating, in which the self detaches itself from its diverse contents in order to subject these to critical inspection:

As the free personality establishes itself inwardly through the act in which the self disregards everything by which it could be externally determined, relates itself to itself and determines itself in its inner infinity only by itself, so by this very act the person opposes himself, as the essential, to what is external, removing from it the right to independent validity, and making it into the appearance and immediate existence of his will.<sup>38</sup>

He now concludes: 'Man is a product of history, not of nature. He is the product of himself and of his deed.'<sup>39</sup>

The anti-naturalist and the activist strands of Bauer's position place him firmly within the Kantian and Fichtean traditions of practical reason. They rely also on the idea of spontaneity, one of the central and distinctive concepts of German philosophy since Leibniz,<sup>40</sup> and while the Leibnizian and Kantian versions are significantly different, the core meaning is the ability to be self-determining in one's actions, rather than simply reacting to external causes. For Kant, spontaneity characterises the will's capacity to relate critically to external causes, to abstract from such causality in the formulation of its ends, and to direct activity according to self-given rules or maxims. Contrary to

<sup>37</sup> On these two moments in Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, see M. Wendte, *Gottmenschliche Einheit bei Hegel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), pp. 345–47.

<sup>38</sup> B. Bauer, *Die Religion des alten Testaments in der geschichtlichen Entwicklung ihrer Prinzipien dargestellt*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Dümmler, 1838), vol. I, p. 183.

<sup>39</sup> Bauer, 'Rezension: *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*', 85.

<sup>40</sup> Spontaneity is a technical term meaning self-causing action; it does not mean unreflective action, as in common usage. G. W. Leibniz, *Monadology*, N. Rescher (ed.) (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, [1720] 1991), esp. Section 11–13; D. Rutherford, 'Leibniz on Spontaneity' in D. Rutherford and J. A. Cover (eds.) *Leibniz. Nature and Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 156–80.

Enlightenment materialism, the impressions and desires which, through their sensuous natures, subjects necessarily experience do not directly determine actions.<sup>41</sup> There is always a space for reflection, for critical distancing, for 'negative freedom' as the freedom to resist external causes. Practical reason endows subjects with the ability to examine the workings of natural causes or sensuous desires; and to select among them or withstand them, according to their fitness with our purposes, or their intrinsic moral worth, i.e. according to their relation to our happiness (empirical practical reason), or to our moral freedom (pure practical reason).<sup>42</sup> Negative freedom in Kant's sense is precisely this independence of the will from desires, and the capacity to adjudicate among them; the will is governed only by causes which it itself admits, or allows to operate.<sup>43</sup> The Kantian concept of autonomy is grounded in this spontaneity, as moral self-legislation in the light of universal principles; but even in heteronomous acts, subjects are not simply determined from without, but actively collude with illegitimate external causes,<sup>44</sup> in opposition to duty. Happiness and empirical practical reason have an important place in Kant's conception of rational action, but always ought to remain under the hegemony of our ethical obligations. These ideas, in their re-appropriation by Fichte, recur in Bruno Bauer's account of infinite self-consciousness and in his attitude towards economic or religious particularism that must be transcended as a condition for genuine freedom. Identities and interests are not a privileged zone exempt from criticism, but count only as rationally validated. Freedom is not simply attaining objects of desire, nor clinging to unexamined values. It lies in the critical assessment of desire and values, and the pursuit of general interests, contributing to historical progress. 'Free means ethical!'<sup>45</sup> Bauer asserts. On his Fichtean reading of Hegel, Bauer insists that we conceive singulars or individuals as the effective synthesis of universal and particular,<sup>46</sup> as spontaneous rational beings capable of consciously adopting and enacting general interests. Bauer finds these resources in Hegel himself, but his attentiveness to the

<sup>41</sup> See H. E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 5–6, 39–40, 60–61, 85, 191–98.

<sup>42</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L. W. Beck (London: Macmillan, 1956 [1788]); D. Henrich, D. S. Pacini (eds.), *Between Kant and Hegel. Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 46–61.

<sup>43</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 33–34. <sup>44</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, 108–13.

<sup>45</sup> B. Bauer, *Kritik der Evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker. Erster Band* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841), 311.

<sup>46</sup> Bauer's position contrasts sharply with Max Stirner's anti-perfectionist idea of singularity as mere particularity. M. Stirner, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1845).

Fichtean sources of Hegel allows him to emphasise these elements against other members of the Hegelian School.<sup>47</sup>

Here the implications of Bauer's theoretical differences with Ludwig Feuerbach become manifest. In seeking to invert idealism, in order, as he believes, to uncover the philosophical truths it has occluded, Feuerbach's materialism proclaims the primacy of being over thought. For Feuerbach this means the primacy of perception: the self is tightly integrated into the sense-world; its receptivity to sense-impressions is highlighted over its spontaneous activity. Feuerbach is resistant to Kantian and Fichtean ideas of spontaneity and autonomy, and to the Hegelian unity of thought and being, because he finds them overly rationalistic, stressing the intellectual concept over sensuous intuition, and illegitimately rendering thought prior to being.<sup>48</sup>

Bauer's critique consists in the claim that Feuerbach has missed the vital Fichtean moment in Hegel, the activist and transformative relation to objectivity, and the centrality of individual agency.<sup>49</sup> Bauer repudiates the naturalistic rendering of the self. Feuerbach plunges individuals, as sensuous entities, into nature or the community, from which they absorb their values; but for Bauer, this unity is merely the first moment in the process of emancipation, as outlined in the *Posaune*. Feuerbach leaves undeveloped the self's *activity* in realising rational ends. The Feuerbachian universal, or species-being,<sup>50</sup> is not the abstractive capacity of self-initiating change, as in Bauer (or Hegel). It is a generic or distributive property: a shared set of given natural attributes, and not a spontaneous, personal acquisition. It is this system of natural ends which moral activities are intended to promote, rather than the Kantian idea of freedom and self-determination.<sup>51</sup> Feuerbachian perfectionism thus retains a markedly pre-Kantian character.<sup>52</sup> For Bauer, the solution is not greater immersion in sensibility, but critical distancing from it; the

<sup>47</sup> D. Moggach, 'Subject or substance: The meta-ethics of the Hegelian school,' in M. Quante and A. Mohseni (eds.), *Die linken Hegelianer. Studien zum Verhältnis von Religion und Politik im Vormärz* (Paderborn: Fink, 2015), pp. 177–98.

<sup>48</sup> L. Feuerbach, 'Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie' in W. Schuffenhauer (ed.), *Gesammelte Werke* (henceforth *GW*), 21 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1981), vol. IX, pp. 16–62; and in the same volume, 'Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft,' pp. 264–341; and 'Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie,' pp. 243–63.

<sup>49</sup> Bauer, 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs,' 86–88. On pre-Kantian elements in Feuerbach (though not identified as such), see D. Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 25–108; Leopold, *Young Karl Marx*, pp. 183–218.

<sup>50</sup> Feuerbach, *Wesen des Christenthums*, 28–29.

<sup>51</sup> L. Feuerbach, 'Über Spiritualismus und Materialismus,' *GW*, vol. XI, 53–186.

<sup>52</sup> H. Williams, 'Ludwig Feuerbach's Critique of religion and the end of moral philosophy,' in Moggach, *New Hegelians*, 50–66, on Feuerbach's inadequate engagement with Kant.

ends of activity are not immediately given by nature, but by practical reason, which works on sense-materials but is never simply determined by them. Bauer's *Vormärz* thought traces the historical process of securing the accord of thought and being as an imperative ethical task, not a naturalistic process. It is thus a historical perfectionism of a different cast from Feuerbach's, an emphatically *post-Kantian* perfectionism, replacing happiness with freedom as its highest value.<sup>53</sup>

While partaking in a similar conception of species-being and collective values, Karl Marx differentiates himself from Feuerbach because he shares with Bauer a stress on self-activity.<sup>54</sup> Marx's revised notion of spontaneity, derived from the idealists, underlies his idea of labour. It is fundamental to his critique of capitalism as a system which not only immiserates the workers, depriving them of material satisfactions, but which, primarily, vitiates their freedom, their capacity to be self-determining in work. Marx contrasts his own emergent activist materialism with Feuerbach's sensualism, arguing that the latter's defect is its failure to recognise the emancipatory power of labour. Feuerbach celebrates not transformation but groundedness, passivity, sensuous receptivity: the immersion of human beings in nature, and their dependency on it, rather than their capacity to reshape it through work. Feuerbach himself believes that this shift towards naturalism represents a theoretical advance over idealist mystifications, where, he claims, thought is detached from its rootedness in the senses and the natural world;<sup>55</sup> but as Marx critically notes, the unity of the human subject and nature through the primacy of perception is won at a high cost, forfeiting the dynamic sense of subjectivity, self-activity, and self-making, the key element of the idealist heritage. This sense Marx wants to retain, but in materialised form, as a theory of labour.<sup>56</sup>

Marx's understanding of labour takes up elements of the German idealist tradition, especially ideas of spontaneity and self-formation deriving from Leibniz's critique of mechanistic materialism.<sup>57</sup> Like Leibniz's idea of spontaneity as action which is self-originated, not merely a reaction to external causes, a notion of inner causation underlies Marx's account of unalienated labour. These ideas are further developed under

<sup>53</sup> D. Moggach, 'Post-Kantian perfectionism' in Moggach, *Politics, Religion and Art*, 179–200.

<sup>54</sup> The stress on self-development is integral to Marx's project, and is not an incidental or belated response to specific polemics; but see G. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx. Greatness and Illusion* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), p. 220.

<sup>55</sup> See note 48. <sup>56</sup> K. Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach,' *MECW*, vol. V, pp. 3–5.

<sup>57</sup> R. Bodéüs (ed. and trans.), *Leibniz-Thomasius. Correspondances* (Paris: Vrin, 1993); M. R. Antognazza, *Leibniz. An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 52–54.



the influence of Kantian practical reason, with its stress on autonomy or rational self-determination and its repudiation of heteronomy;<sup>58</sup> it is from this vantage point that the specificity of Marx's theory of alienation is best revealed. Following Fichte, Marx links spontaneity and autonomy with labour, and interrogates the concrete conditions for self-determining activity. For Fichte, labour is the capacity to translate our concepts and ends into the sense world, making over the domain of objectivity in the light of practical reason; the right to labour is the fundamental natural right.<sup>59</sup> In a just society, all ought to be able to live, and live decently, from their work, and to possess sufficient resources and instruments to sustain their activities. Fichte details a highly interventionist state which, despite its egregious restrictions and controls, is intended to promote the freedom of its members, and to maintain the conditions for their agency, their ability to shape objectivity in the light of their ideas; it is not designed primarily as a vehicle for their happiness, as the older interventionism of Christian Wolff had been.<sup>60</sup> As it derives chiefly from considerations of pure and not empirical practical reason, and the conditions for its effective exercise, the Fichtean state is representative of post-Kantian perfectionism. Marx adapts these underlying motifs in his own political-economic criticism. Moreover, following Hegel and his *Vormärz* leftist reception, Marx seeks to uncover the dynamics and inner contradictions definitive of the modern world, with its characteristic notions of civil society and the state, and to produce an account of its determinate negations, its necessary conditions of transformation. Marx's critique of the modern state in the *Vormärz* develops in two phases, which parallel the evolution of Bauer's criticisms, but lead to markedly distinct conclusions.

The first moment of Marx's political critique is his close engagement with Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* in the spring and summer of 1843.<sup>61</sup> Here he contends that Hegel's conception of the state is insufficiently grounded in a genuine universality;<sup>62</sup> that its institutional provisions are inadequate to allow an authentic common interest to emerge and be articulated. Only a political democracy would promote such commonality, but Hegel's theory of sovereignty is not robust enough to accommodate the broad participation of the people. Secondly, Marx argues that Hegel makes unwarranted concessions to the positivity of merely existing political

<sup>58</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, 108–13.

<sup>59</sup> J. G. Fichte, *System der Sittenlehre, Werke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), vol. IV, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> J. G. Fichte, *Der geschloßne Handelsstaat, Werke*, 1971, vol. III, pp. 388–513; Moggach, 'Freedom and perfection,' 100–23.

<sup>61</sup> K. Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's philosophy of law,' *MECW*, vol. III, pp. 5–129.

<sup>62</sup> A. Chitty, 'The basis of the state in the Marx of 1842' in Moggach, *The New Hegelians*, 220–41.

relations, which are sanctioned as if they were logically entailed; hence, for example, Hegel seeks to validate the monarchical principle as embodying the logical category of singularity. Like Bauer in his 1840 *Landeskirche*, Marx argues that the task of theory is to purify the idea of the state of these irrational vestiges. He agrees with Feuerbach, however, that the root of the problem lies in Hegel's idealism: idealism inverts the true relation of subject and predicate when it hypostatizes thought as the genuine subject and reduces concrete individuals to its bearers.<sup>63</sup> It is this reversal that explains the false positivism permeating Hegel's accounts of state and society, his tendency to seek arbitrary exemplifications of pre-existing logical categories, from which ensues his apparent accommodation with the existing order.<sup>64</sup>

If the second moment of Bruno Bauer's critique entails a sharper definition of the concept of citizenship as the agency of general interests, Marx's further criticisms lead him to a devaluation of the political in favour of the social: he advocates not a more representative and responsive democratic-republican state, but rather the disappearance of the state, the dissolution of the state's putative universality into a reconstituted civil society. His adherence to socialism is announced in autumn 1843.<sup>65</sup> Whereas Bauer highlights the necessity for individual citizens to envisage and participate in the general will as a condition of rational freedom or universal self-consciousness, Marx seeks a collective solution. In this new conception, a distinct kind of dialectical synthesis occurs: the universality which Hegel and the republicans attributed in different ways to the state is to be absorbed into the relations of concrete social life; the realm of labour and economic reproduction is to be transformed from a competitive and exploitative sphere to one in which genuine common interests, based on collective property, emerge. Where Hegel and his republican followers posit a separation between state and civil society, Marx instead proposes a fusion, or an assimilation of the state into the productive realm. Despite its anti-Hegelian conclusion, Marx's argument reflects parts, at least, of Hegel's depiction of the dialectic of the will in the *Philosophy of Right*: the universality of the will is abstract and contentless until it is fructified by particularity, by specific ends, goals, and desires; but the particulars are merely arbitrary and erratic until the will gives them direction and coherence.<sup>66</sup> In a dialectical unity, each side of this relationship transforms the other.

<sup>63</sup> L. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973).

<sup>64</sup> Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's philosophy of law', 99–104.

<sup>65</sup> Marx, 'Contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of law. Introduction', *MECW*, vol. III, p. 186.

<sup>66</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §5–§7.

In Marx's rendering, under socialism, the principle of universality of which the state is only an abstract expression is to become effective and concrete by penetrating and reconfiguring the relations which sustain and reproduce material social life. These latter must be transformed, and cannot count merely as given; but in the process the state is itself transcended. Once civil society is emancipated from the grip of capital, a separate political sphere becomes redundant. For Marx, the collective control of the means of production overcomes the opposition of particular and general interest rooted in private property. Autonomy is realised when individuals are liberated from their subordination to the division of labour, through the establishment of a free, conscious, and willed connection between labour and its preconditions, unmarred by class. In the notional overcoming of the state, Marx rethinks, in original form, part, at least, of the Hegelian process. The parallel second moment of Bruno Bauer's critique yields an instructive comparison. There, the dialectical synthesis produces a different outcome: not the absorption of universality into the collective relations of civil society, but the assumption of universality by each singular citizen as a normative orientation for action. In this conscious positing of the universal as an ethical task, Bauer's Fichteanism remains paramount.

From autumn 1843, Marx takes the self-emancipation of the working class to be the essential characteristic of his specific version of socialism. His polemics with Hegelian republicans give further definition to his socialist project.<sup>67</sup> For Marx, republicanism is incapable of transforming bourgeois civil society.<sup>68</sup> The republican state, as exemplified both in French revolutionary Jacobinism and in its German *Vormärz* proponents, is (like religion) a fetish: a false universal suspended above civil society, but unconscious of its own origin and unable to create a genuine common interest where the economy remains divided by class.<sup>69</sup> In erecting a sphere of spurious political universality, an illusory community of citizens suspended above the mundane world of bourgeois individualists, republicanism merely confirms and conceals the egoistic drives of civil society, in no way imperilling the hegemony of capital.<sup>70</sup> In Marx's account, under socialism, the principle of universality, reclaimed from

<sup>67</sup> Marx advocates a temporary strategic alliance between republicanism and socialism, however, as the German bourgeoisie fails to eliminate feudalism: Marx, 'The bourgeoisie and the counter-revolution', *MECW*, vol. VIII, pp. 154–69.

<sup>68</sup> Marx, 'On the Jewish question', *MECW*, vol. III, pp. 164–68. Interpretative accounts include M. Löwy, '"The Poetry of the Past": Marx and the French Revolution,' *New Left Review*, 177 (1989), 111–24; A. Gilbert, *Marx's Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981), esp. 27–33; F. Furet, *Marx et la Révolution Française* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), pp. 13–82; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> Marx, 'On the Jewish question', pp. 164–68. <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

its alienated repository in the state, becomes the genuine common interest vested in the shared ownership of the productive apparatus of society. Common ownership supplants citizenship as the guarantor of a general will; and therewith citizenship and its language of rights become, it would seem, obsolete. Thus, from its inception, Marx's socialism is inspired by the idea of a universal which is not insulated in a separate political sphere, but which infuses the material realities of labour. In working out these ideas, Marx appropriates and refashions Kantian ideas of autonomy and heteronomy, and of spontaneity and receptivity:

Political emancipation is the reduction of man, on the one hand, to a member of civil society, to an *egoistic, independent* individual, and, on the other hand, to a citizen, a juridical person . . . Only when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognised and organised his '*forces propres*' as *social* forces, and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of *political* power, only then will human emancipation be accomplished.<sup>71</sup>

Reflecting further on the concrete relations of civil society, Marx models his theory of labour in the 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*<sup>72</sup> on Hegel's account of external teleology in the *Science of Logic*.<sup>73</sup> As teleological action, the labour process comprises three moments: first, the subjective end, or the intention which precedes, animates, and directs the stages of its own realisation; next, the means or instrumentality through which the subjective end is effected, the application of tools and causal mechanisms to transform objectivity in the light of the postulated goal; and finally, the objective or realised end, the product of activity, where the idea that initiates the process is now made concrete. Occurring in each of these three aspects, the alienation of labour is the subversion of the connection between active subjects and the purposes which they pursue in their activity; this is Marx's materialist recasting of Kant's distinction between autonomy and heteronomy, between self-directed and other-directed acts. Prescribed by an alien subjectivity, the ends of labour under the current relations of production are heteronomous, and violate the principle of self-activity which Marx takes to be the essence of freedom. Labour is alienated because proletarians as active subjects cannot determine their own purposes in work; they execute heteronomous

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168; emphases are in the original.

<sup>72</sup> Marx, 'Economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844', *MECW*, vol. III, pp. 270–82.

<sup>73</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), pp. 735–54. As Michael Quante reminded me in private correspondence, Marx's proximate source here is the conception of action which Hegel develops in the Morality section of the *Philosophy of Right*, §105–40.

ends, imposed by the owners of the productive apparatus. They are, moreover, deprived of access to the instruments of labour, which are the private property of another class. This relation of exclusion from the necessary means of labour defines the very existence of the proletariat as a social class. As Marx will argue in the *German Ideology*, it marks the historical specificity of this class in respect to other dominated groups, such as the slaves of antiquity (fully reduced to instrumental status: *organa empsycha*, as Aristotle calls them) and the serfs of feudalism (small independent producers held in subjection by the owners of the land).<sup>74</sup> The proletarians embody heteronomy by becoming instruments of another's will for the duration of the labour process (though, in contradistinction to slaves, proletarians are self-owners as a precondition of exchanging their labour power for a wage; their juridical emancipation, though historically an advance, is the condition of their real economic exploitation).<sup>75</sup> They are, thirdly, deprived of the product of their labour, which belongs to the owners of the instruments of production. In working, the proletariat constantly renews the very conditions of its own subjugation; it reproduces the massive system of heteronomy as the product of its own deed.<sup>76</sup> Yet in this very centrality lies the transformative potential of the proletariat. Capitalism's essential trait is the separation of the workers from the means of production. This trait which defines the system also marks its limit, the conditions and the agency of its possible overthrow.

Socialism, or the autonomy of labour, means the overcoming of alienation in each of the three respects that Marx identifies in the 1844 *Manuscripts*. It implies that workers gain control over all the stages of the material interchange which they conduct with nature: the determination of the purposes to be pursued in work, the processes and instruments involved in realising these ends, and the distribution of the products. This requires, for Marx, collective property in the means of production. The imposition of the ends of labour by the current owners of the productive apparatus prevents the self-determination of subjects in work; it violates their freedom, and is not merely a derogation from their happiness or material satisfaction. Otherwise for Marx a merely distributive socialism would be sufficient, one which aims to raise the workers' level of consumption or

<sup>74</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, MECW, vol. V, 34–35.

<sup>75</sup> K. Marx, *Capital* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), vol. I, pp. 119–25.

<sup>76</sup> Labour is also alienated in respect to species-being, vitiated by competitive relations among workers. See H. Marcuse, 'The foundations of historical materialism', *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 1–48; and C.J. Arthur, *Dialectics of Labour: Marx in His Relation to Hegel* (London: Blackwell, 1986).

wages.<sup>77</sup> But such a solution, important though it is, is incomplete in Marx's view, as it would leave intact relations of domination in the productive act itself. It is not merely a matter of improving the living and working conditions of the proletariat, but of transforming its relation to labour itself, in all its phases. While eschewing idealist language, Marx is implicitly addressing the Kantian distinction between the domain of freedom, wherein subjects set their own goals, and that of happiness, or the degree of satisfaction of needs. The latter is not negligible for Marxian socialism (nor indeed for Kant),<sup>78</sup> but neither is it primary; or rather, as Marx will later formulate the distinction, the relations of production (the moment of formative activity) ground and condition the relations of distribution (the allocation of the product).<sup>79</sup> The failure to recognise this distinction is the root of the sentimental socialisms of the 1840s and later, which Marx always decries, socialisms that focus on the distress and immiseration of the workers, rather than on their reduction to dependent instruments of another's will, and their revolutionary potential to reclaim their own agency. Criticising socialists who describe the proletariat as needy and suffering victims, Marx, while never minimising the destitution of the workers, stresses primarily the dynamic, world-making historical role of this class.<sup>80</sup> It is an active, formative power, the determinate negation of existing productive relations.<sup>81</sup> In taking up the legacy of idealism, where empirical practical reason and happiness are governed by the idea of freedom prescribed by pure practical reason, Marx recognises the duality of labour as need satisfaction and as self-directed, self-causing activity. He thus avoids the defects of materialism like Feuerbach's, the denial of subjective spontaneity. For Marx, the idealists had failed to think through the principle of autonomy to its radical conclusions, but had rightly stressed the primacy of activity. This activity now needs to be re-interpreted as labour, the material interchange with nature. It is here, rather than in ethics or politics, that true autonomy is to be achieved, in the collective control of the means of production.

Bauer's and Marx's political programmes are further articulated in the crisis of 1848. Bauer ardently defends the principles of popular sovereignty, the capacity of the revolutionary people to legislate on its own behalf. In the name of republican self-rule, the monarchical offer of

<sup>77</sup> On the primacy of production over consumption, see Marx, 'Karl Grün: *Die soziale Bewegung in Frankreich und Belgien*'. Darmstadt 1845. Or 'The historiography of true socialism', *MECW*, vol. V, pp. 516–19; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 642 n. 37.

<sup>78</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 24.

<sup>79</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), pp. 81–114.

<sup>80</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Gareth Stedman Jones (ed.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002), pp. 245–57.

<sup>81</sup> Marx, 'Hegel's philosophy of Law, Introduction', 175.

a constitution ought to be repudiated. The Prussian king's reluctant proposal to define his powers legally is an arbitrary concession, leaving sovereignty in the hands of historically retrograde forces, and treating freedom merely as a gift from on high, rather than the prize of struggle. To accede to the concession would be an act of political heteronomy.<sup>82</sup> For Bauer, the decisive question of 1848 is the transition to a republic, consciously endowing itself with its own institutions, building a home market, and infusing all relationships with justice.<sup>83</sup> For Marx, the Revolutions of 1848 do not yet represent the pure confrontation of bourgeoisie and proletariat that he anticipates with the further evolution of the capitalist mode of production. The immediate task is the liquidation of feudalism and the opening of a democratic space of primarily functional value, wherein future class struggles can be fought out most advantageously for the workers.<sup>84</sup>

Despite his repudiation of moralism as a vapid and impotent form of critique,<sup>85</sup> Marx's programme of emancipation is not devoid of ethical content. His *Vormärz* position has been described as a self-realisation theory of freedom,<sup>86</sup> or as an account of dynamic needs,<sup>87</sup> containing both natural and historically variable components (basic physical requirements, intellectual development, labour and creativity, and communal membership).<sup>88</sup> Its essence is the recognition of self-activity and of the conditions of its effectiveness, the central idea of the post-Kantian perfectionisms of Fichte and of the Hegelian left.<sup>89</sup> Marx's *Vormärz* position has distinctive features, however, which condition the subsequent evolution of his thought after 1848.

Marx's early thinking combines Kantian ideas of freedom with the idea of a substantive good reminiscent of earlier perfectionisms.<sup>90</sup> What he retains from Kant and Fichte is the idea of agents' spontaneity, of their ability (through their labour) to initiate changes in the objective world and to realise their subjective ends. In his *Vormärz* accounts, labour is the vehicle of both need satisfaction and of freedom. In his late work, Marx himself overlooks this fundamental duality when he assimilates labour to the realm of

<sup>82</sup> Bauer, 'Erste Wahlrede von 1848', in Barnikol, *Bruno Bauer*, 525–29. <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> On Bauer after 1848: Moggach, *Bauer*, pp. 180–87.

<sup>85</sup> For a concise bibliography on Marx and moralism: G. E. McCarthy, 'The last of the schoolmen. Natural law and social justice in Karl Marx' in M. J. Thompson (ed.), *Constructing Marxist Ethics. Critique, Normativity, Praxis* (Brill, 2015), p. 201, note 11.

<sup>86</sup> Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy*, 160–67.

<sup>87</sup> Leopold, *Young Karl Marx*, p. 226. <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>89</sup> Moggach, 'Post-Kantian Perfectionism', 179–200; M. Quante, 'Die fragile Einheit des Marxschen Denkens', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 60 (2006), 591–608.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, G. E. McCarthy, *Marx and Aristotle* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992); Stedman Jones, 'Introduction', in *Manifesto*, pp. 99–140.



necessity, to the sphere of empirical practical reason and its exigencies. He then evokes a realm of freedom *beyond* labour, as a possibility only available once labour is emancipated, but not contained within labour itself,<sup>91</sup> but here he renounces his earlier view of alienation as primarily an assault on the freedom of the producers *within* the act of working.

Even in his earlier work, Marx's turn to materialism is in some ways a reversion behind Kant, to earlier perfectionist forms. These pre-Kantian elements are communicated to Marx through the Feuerbachian idea of species-being and the postulated conditions of thriving, which he retains alongside his more dynamic notion of self-formation.<sup>92</sup> In stressing shared collective values, the effectiveness of given or predetermined ends (even if these are conceived as historically variable rather than as biologically fixed), Marx fails to take up significant aspects of the Kantian account of agency, namely the evaluative and selective functions of negative freedom that other left Hegelians stress. He misses the vital second moment of emancipation, recognised by Bauer, namely the centrality of individual assent to these ends, the ways in which they are 'posited', internalised, and made directive of action.<sup>93</sup> The consequence is that for Marx, the universal remains a generic property, and the dialectical concept of singularity as synthesis of universal and particular is ill defined. This deficiency is partly responsible for the derogation of rights and citizenship in Marx's thought; individuals are parts of a whole, more than self-defining agents, despite countervailing pressures in Marx's account of labour. The generic or distributive quality of the universal also underlies the idea that the state is dispensable under socialism, since no special forum for the practice of freedom is necessary once the sphere of production is subject to social control. Marx's early critiques of republicanism underscore these conclusions. Yet Marx's interlocutor Bauer had perspicuously identified problems in collectivist and naturalist approaches to emancipation, and had defended an alternate form of post-Kantian perfectionism which remained closer to its Fichtean roots. The central idea of these *Vormärz* ethical programmes is the active, formative, spontaneous subject, extending the realm of freedom. This is the legacy of idealism, and if Marx enriches it though his analysis of labour, he also fails to draw out all its implications for emancipated social life.

<sup>91</sup> Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, 820. See also S. Sayers, 'Freedom and the "Realm of Necessity" in Moggach', *New Hegelians*, 261–74.

<sup>92</sup> See M. Quante, 'Kommentar', in *Karl Marx. Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 2009), pp. 264–68.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 112.

## 10 David Friedrich Strauss in 1848

### An Analysis of His 'Theologicopolitical Speeches'

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Norbert Waszek

With his seminal book, *The Life of Jesus*,<sup>1</sup> and his later study *On Christian Doctrine*,<sup>2</sup> D. F. Strauss revolutionised Protestant theology. In his *Polemical Writings* of 1837,<sup>3</sup> Strauss also initiated the now-classical division of Hegel's school into a left and a right wing, classifying himself at the same time as a main representative of the left.<sup>4</sup> But when, in 1848, Strauss engaged himself, briefly but actively, in politics (see below) he soon disappointed the left-wing voters who had brought him into office. Similarly, whereas some later scholars have seen a striking contrast, even a paradox in Strauss' attitude – as if the radical critic of religion and theology had turned conservative or even reactionary in his politics<sup>5</sup> – other biographers and interpreters of Strauss have simply neglected or marginalised his participation in political action as a short and insignificant episode.<sup>6</sup> This chapter will try to challenge such conventional evaluations by closer analysis of his political programme, as documented

<sup>1</sup> D. F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, Kritisch Bearbeitet*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835–1836); English edn: *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*; translated by G. Eliot (London: Chapman Brothers, 1846).

<sup>2</sup> D. F. Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung: und im Kampfe mit der modernen Wissenschaft*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1840–1841).

<sup>3</sup> D. F. Strauss, *Streitschriften zur Vertheidigung meiner Schrift über das Leben Jesu und zur Charakteristik der gegenwärtigen Theologie* (Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1837).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, part 3, pp. 95–126, in particular p. 126.

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Schlawe thus speaks of an 'extreme dualism' between a political conservatism and a theological radicalism; F. Schlawe, *David Friedrich Strauß: eine kurze Lebensbeschreibung anhand von eigenen Äußerungen* (Ludwigsburg: Ungeheuer & Ulmer, 1974), p. 49; K. Harraeus, *David Friedrich Strauß: Sein Leben und seine Schriften unter Heranziehung seiner Briefe dargestellt* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1901), p. 212, and H. Harris, *David Friedrich Strauss and his Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 176.

<sup>6</sup> E. Zeller, *David Friedrich Strauß in seinem Leben und seinen Schriften* (Bonn: Emil Strauß, 1874), pp. 68–73; A. Kohut, *David Friedrich Strauß als Denker und Erzieher* (Leipzig: A. Kröner, 1908), pp. 124–59; J.-M. Paul, *D. F. Strauss (1808–1874) et son époque* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), pp. 330–9. Even Theobald Ziegler, whose massive study *David Friedrich Strauß*, 2 vols. (Strasbourg: K.J. Trübner, 1908) contains a chapter of eighty pages on Strauss as politician (vol. II, pp. 409–87), writes towards the end of this presentation of a mere political episode (vol. II, p. 461).

in Strauss' election speeches of April 1848<sup>7</sup>. These were republished almost thirty years later in his collected writings<sup>8</sup> – clearly indicating that he did not disapprove of his texts in later years). In the light of this, the existing view that Strauss betrayed his Hegelian heritage when he turned to politics might need some re-evaluation.

To challenge the traditional view that Strauss' political engagement of 1848 was only short-lived, almost against his will, and that he escaped as soon as possible, reference must be made to texts before and after 1848, in which he dealt regularly with political issues. These texts cannot be analysed adequately in the present framework but we can cite from Georg Herwegh's radical collection, *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (*Twenty-one sheets from Switzerland*).<sup>9</sup> In 1847, Strauss delivered a lecture discussing the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate, but which was nevertheless full of critical allusions to the then reigning king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV.<sup>10</sup> And his subsequent, much-criticised book handles politically sensitive issues, especially in [chapter 4](#).<sup>11</sup>

Before engaging in an analysis of the political *ideas* Strauss expounded in his election speeches, his short but intense and active role in politics should be considered.<sup>12</sup> In 1848, Strauss lived a rather withdrawn life in Heilbronn, the upheavals caused by his early theological masterpieces to

<sup>7</sup> D.F. Strauß, *Sechs Theologisch-politische Volksreden* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: J.G. Cotta, 1848) – a brochure of fifty-five pages, consisting of the six speeches Strauss delivered between 17 and 28 April 1848 and a preface written shortly after. I quote from this original edition (*Strauss, Volksreden*) which is available online: <http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/diglit/strauss1848>. The translations from this text into English are the author's.

<sup>8</sup> D. F. Strauß, *Gesammelte Schriften* (henceforth *Strauss, GS*). E. Zeller (ed.), 12 vols. (Bonn: Emil Strauß, 1876–1878), vol. I, pp. 237–72. *The supplementary volume of Strauss's letters – Ausgewählte Briefe von David Friedrich Strauß*, E. Zeller (ed.) (Bonn: Emil Strauß, 1895) – henceforth *Strauss, Briefe*.

<sup>9</sup> See G. Herwegh (ed.) *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (Zürich & Winterthur: Verlag des Literarischen Comptoirs, 1843); for Strauss' epigrammatic contribution, see 'Xenien', pp. 250–52. The seemingly strange title is a critical allusion to the rule, imposed by the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, that texts under a certain length, twenty sheets or roughly 320 pages, had to undergo censorship prior to publication. Larger publications were only controlled after publication on the assumption that 'big books' would not reach a wide readership and could thus hardly become subversive.

<sup>10</sup> D. F. Strauss, *Der Romantiker auf dem Throne der Cäsaren, oder Julian der Abtrünnige* (Mannheim: Friedrich Bassermann, 1847) republished in *Strauss, GS*, vol. 1, pp. 175–216.

<sup>11</sup> D. F. Strauss, *Der alte und der neue Glaube. Ein Bekenntniß* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1872); republished as vol. 6 of *Strauss, GS*. An English translation by Mathilde Blind appeared under the title: *The Old Faith and the New: A Confession* (London: Asher, 1873).

<sup>12</sup> I have given a fuller account of this in my German article, 'D.F. Strauß im Revolutionsjahr 1848. Eine Lektüre seiner "Sechs theologisch-politische[n] Volksreden"' in H. Drecolt and B. Potthast (eds.), *David Friedrich Strauß als Schriftsteller* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2017) pp. 191–231.

a large extent behind him. He had lost his appointment at Tübingen and had been pensioned off from a chair secured in Zurich before he could give a single lecture. This pension, coupled with a small inheritance from his father (who died in 1841) and some revenues from his publications, gave him the life of a private and almost independent scholar. Domestic life had not been successful either: his marriage in 1842 to the singer Agnese Schebest had quickly turned into a nightmare and as late as 1848 he was embroiled in a legal agreement to formalise their separation (his Catholic wife did not accept a formal divorce). In part, at least, the unhappy marriage and painful separation might have had something to do with the years leading up to 1848, which had not been particularly productive for Strauss, although he had continued to publish. Heilbronn, where Strauss resided in 1848 (like Ludwigsburg, the place of his birth, and Tübingen, where he first studied and later taught) belonged to the kingdom of Württemberg. Unlike many other German territories, Strauss' native Württemberg saw no real revolution in 1848 (as distinct from some minor skirmishes) – King Wilhelm I of Württemberg (1816–64) avoided trouble by making concessions, such as granting direct elections to the Frankfurt Assembly, a measure that soon provided an opening for Strauss. Slightly earlier, of course, the revolutionary impetus had reached German territories from France with news of King Louis-Philippe's fall and the proclamation of the republic. Strauss learned that news from German papers such as the *Schwäbischer Merkur*.<sup>13</sup> A letter dated 29 February 1848 to one of his oldest friends, a former schoolmate and fellow student, Ernst Rapp, in whom Strauss had almost unlimited confidence, shows his clear enthusiasm for the revolution and the creation of the Second Republic in France: with the cry of joy 'what times are beginning!', the affirmation 'we can only win', and the concluding remark that 'our youthful wishes, our inmost thoughts are thus realised', Strauss made clear his feelings on the matter.<sup>14</sup> More than a month later, on 3 April, again in a letter to Rapp, his enthusiasm seems a little less ardent, for he says that 'we' (i.e. Rapp and himself, unless Strauss is using the royal 'we') 'cannot play an [active] role in the current movement, at least at its present stage', since 'practical realisation' of the political aims 'is not our affair', though he does insist that we 'count among those who prepared the movement theoretically'.<sup>15</sup> At any rate, on 16 April, a small committee from his native town of Ludwigsburg visited Strauss at Heilbronn and

<sup>13</sup> At the time and throughout the nineteenth century this was the leading newspaper in Württemberg. It was published in Stuttgart from 1785 to 1941. Strauss was a regular reader and also contributed to the paper.

<sup>14</sup> Strauss, *Briefe*, p. 204. <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

persuaded him to stand as their candidate for the Ludwigsburg constituency (which included the town of Ludwigsburg but also, as proved to be important, the rural surroundings) in the election for the National Assembly to be held at St Paul's Church at Frankfurt. He was taken directly to Ludwigsburg, to begin the campaign the next day, 17 April. It was in the context of this campaign that the six speeches which are the textual basis of the following analysis of his political ideas were initially delivered and, slightly later, published (see note 7). Strauss failed to be elected to the National Assembly (the opposition of pietistic clergy in the rural hinterland proved too strong), but he certainly secured a majority in Ludwigsburg itself, with 2,162 votes versus 1,516 for his opponent,<sup>16</sup> but lost overall with 5,851 votes for his opponent and 3,365 for himself. But the citizens of Ludwigsburg (angry that the rural voters, whom they perceived as nothing but manipulated peasants, had snatched the victory from their champion) soon had a chance to offset the result, successfully electing Strauss on 20 May as their member of the regional parliament, the Württemberg Chamber in Stuttgart. Given the result of the previous contest, Strauss' success in the second election (in Ludwigsburg alone) seemed a foregone conclusion and his supporters organised a popular feast for some 200 people and a garden party on the day. Since the Stuttgart Chamber would not meet until 20 September, after a long summer break, Strauss used the following weeks to visit and to consult with friends in the region – Rapp in Enslingen and Christian Käferle in Dobel/Calw, before leaving for a cultural trip to Munich (especially the 'Glyptothek' museum, which housed the Bavarian collection of Greek and Roman sculptures) and taking a holiday in the Bavarian lakes of Kochel and Starnberg.<sup>17</sup> This was hardly a revolutionary itinerary, especially when compared with the one chosen by another, slightly younger man from Württemberg, the poet Georg Herwegh, who in the spring of 1848 led a group of more than 600 German emigrants from France into Germany to participate in the revolutionary uprising in the Grand Duchy of Baden!<sup>18</sup> When the

<sup>16</sup> The winner, successfully supported by the clergy, was Christoph Hoffmann (1815–1885); see C. Kolb's entry in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (henceforth *ADB*), 56 vols. (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875–1912), vol. 50, pp. 393–98; and the entry by W. Hoffman in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (*NDB*), vol. 9, p. 392.

<sup>17</sup> His letters provide detailed and vivid accounts of these trips; *Strauss, Briefe*, especially pp. 217–23.

<sup>18</sup> Herwegh's equally colourful wife, Emma, née Siegmund (1817–1904) left a vivid account of the military adventure: E. Herwegh, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen demokratischen Legion aus Paris, von einer Hochverräterin* (Grünberg [in Silesia]: Levysohn, 1849), republished under the title: *Im Interesse der Wahrheit: zur Geschichte der deutschen demokratischen Legion aus Paris* (ed.) H. Brandstätter (Lengwil [Thurgau/Switzerland]: Libelle, 1998).

Württemberg Chamber finally assembled in late September 1848, Strauss soon felt at odds in the Assembly, for he disliked equally the two principal groups in it, what he called the 'anarchic left' and the 'aristocratic right'.<sup>19</sup> The political centre to which Strauss appears to have aspired was almost non-existent, or at any rate was too small to gain any real significance within the chamber. Among other members of the chamber with whom Strauss tried to represent a moderate line, we shall concentrate on the three who are mentioned by contemporary and later commentators: the lawyer and legal scholar August Ludwig Reyscher (1802–80)<sup>20</sup>; his former enemy, the literary critic Wolfgang Menzel (1798–1873)<sup>21</sup> and the professor of Catholic theology Johannes Kuhn (1806–87).<sup>22</sup> One example may suffice to show how untenable Strauss' position in the Stuttgart Chamber soon became: the debate of 16 November 1848,<sup>23</sup> following the execution of Robert Blum in Vienna.<sup>24</sup> Blum's death aroused a wave of popular indignation throughout Germany and the Stuttgart Chamber wanted to react by sending

<sup>19</sup> The terms are taken from his letter to Rapp, of 28 September; *Strauss, Briefe*, p. 224 and the letter to his brother, Wilhelm Strauss, of 27 September, *Strauss, Briefe*, p. 223.

<sup>20</sup> See J. Rückert, *August Ludwig Reyschers Leben und Rechtstheorie: 1802–1880* (Schweitzer, 1974). Rückert also wrote the entry on Reyscher in the *NDB*, vol. XXI, pp. 482–83.

<sup>21</sup> Strauss attacked Menzel at great length in the second part of his *Streitschriften* of 1837 (see note 3), pp. 89–247, also G. Söhn, 'Wolfgang Menzel' in *Heine-Jahrbuch*, vol. 43 (2004), pp. 191–215; vol. 44 (2005), pp. 132–51 and B. Füllner, 'Heinrich Heines und David Friedrich Strauß' *Streitschriften gegen Wolfgang Menzel. Zur Strategie literarisch-philosophischer Fehden im Vormärz* in *David Friedrich Strauß als Schriftsteller*, pp. 395–410.

<sup>22</sup> See the entry on Kuhn by W. Baum in the *NDB*, vol. 13, pp. 263–64 and H. Wolf, *Ketzer oder Kirchenlehrer? – Der Tübinger Theologe Johannes von Kuhn (1806 – 1887) in den kirchenpolitischen Auseinandersetzungen seiner Zeit* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1992); M. Oelsmann, *Johann Evangelist von Kuhn: Vermittlung zwischen Philosophie und Theologie in Auseinandersetzung mit Aufklärung und Idealismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> The following account is based on the detailed report on this debate to be found in the leading Stuttgart paper *Schwäbische Kronik* (the Swabian Chronicle) from the edition of 18 November 1848, p. 1652. This and the above-mentioned *Schwäbischer Merkur* (Swabian Mercury) were in reality two parts of the same paper, the former reporting on the internal affairs of Württemberg, the latter on foreign affairs.

<sup>24</sup> Blum was a member of the Frankfurt National Assembly. Shortly after the beginning of the revolution in Vienna on 6 October 1848, Blum went there to deliver a declaration of sympathy on behalf of some of the representatives on the left in the Frankfurt Assembly. A mission he completed on 17 October. But a few days later on 25 October, he joined the revolutionary forces who were unsuccessful and had to surrender to regular troops commanded by Alfred I, Prince of Windischgrätz, at the beginning of November. In spite of his formal immunity as a member of parliament, Blum was arrested on 4 November and without a trial worthy of the name executed on 9 November. See E. Angermann, 'Blum, Robert', *NDB*, vol. 2, pp. 322–24; P. Reichel, *Robert Blum. Ein deutscher Revolutionär 1807–1848* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); still instructive is the notice on Blum written by Karl Marx in September 1857 for *The New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. III (1858); now more easily available in *Marx/Engels Collected Works (MECW)*, vol. XVIII (1987), pp. 80–82.



a note of protest to the National Assembly in Frankfurt exhorting it to demand satisfaction from the Austrians for not respecting Blum's parliamentary immunity. Strauss was one of the very few speakers in the house who expressed themselves against such a letter of protest. While Strauss made it quite clear that Austria was 'wrong' (*Unrecht*) to execute Blum in spite of his immunity, he also cast doubt on Blum's attitude: did not Blum himself put his status as Member of Parliament in question, when he climbed the barricades of the revolutionaries, Strauss asked. According to Strauss, the execution was not only 'wrong' but also a 'mistake', for Blum was thus turned into a 'martyr of Republicanism' and (perhaps implying that he was among them) those who see the republican ideal only as an *ignis fatuus* (*Irrlicht*) could only regret the ignoble act. The question of Strauss' preferred form of government (republic or constitutional monarchy) will be treated further in the wider framework of his political ideas; in the immediate context of his parliamentary work, his speech about Blum had the disastrous consequence of isolating him in the Stuttgart Assembly. Not only was the letter of protest accepted with sixty-three votes in favour and only thirteen against, including those of Strauss and Kuhn (see note 22), Strauss also acquired the reputation of being a 'double-edged sword' (as Adolf Seeger, another member of the Assembly, called him), since he had not turned his rhetorical weapons against the right, but had spoken against the left. When Strauss resigned from office on 20 December, ostensibly following parliamentary censure for accusing another member of rhetorical deception, he might simply have found this a pretext for removing himself from a situation in which political isolation rendered his presence ineffectual. In an open letter to his 'fellow-citizens of Ludwigsburg', published in the above-mentioned 'Swabian chronicle' (*Schwäbische Kronik*, of 28 December 1848, p. 1947 f) he referred his resignation to the futility of political action limited to voting with the minority. He insisted that he had no sympathy for the particular interests and privileges of the aristocratic right wing and underlined his initial intentions in the Assembly 'to restructure the conditions [in Württemberg] and, by way of peaceful reforms, deliver the fruits of the French and German revolutions to our fatherland'.<sup>25</sup> Although his active role in politics, from his early enthusiasm for the revolution in France to his resignation from the Stuttgart Chamber, lasted less than a year, and his period as a member of the Regional Assembly in Stuttgart lasted just three months, these facts do not by themselves justify the neglect of his political ideas, which will now be analysed.

<sup>25</sup> *Schwäbische Kronik*, 28 December 1848, p. 1948.



## I Strauss' Election Speeches as a Source for Studying His Political Ideas

Beyond the parliamentary politics for which Strauss, as we have seen, had little inclination or talent, his election speeches address a wide political programme that can be reconstructed systematically, and whose intellectual sources can be identified. Since his speeches belonged to an actual campaign it is inevitable that there are repetitions – Strauss had to convince voters in different parts of his constituency of his political ideas – but this is not necessarily inconvenient for abridging or further elaborating his treatment of respective themes according to each specific audience, he rendered the individual speeches mutually complementary.

### *The Theme of Religion and Politics*

Strauss must have felt the need to explain the term 'theologicopolitical' in the title of the published version of his speeches, for he addresses the issue in the preface of his pamphlet. He explains that in each of the following speeches he had to 'waste' (*verderben*) 'half of his time' in order to justify his stance on religious matters.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the pietistic clergy that favoured his opponent (the above-mentioned Hoffmann; see note 16) mainly attacked Strauss as an atheist, and an inappropriate representative for a pious constituency. Hence the title chosen by Strauss, which corresponded also to the space devoted in his text to questions relating to theology. Since some of his enemies treated him as the 'living Antichrist'<sup>27</sup> because of a book (*The life of Jesus*) 'written 13 years ago' (speaking in 1848 of his 1835 masterpiece), he explains that his book was intended for scholars and theologians, and was not written in order to arouse doubts and scruples among ordinary men, but rather to release scholars from their doubts and scruples, to purge the fundamentals of religion from superstition and fanaticism. He concludes this passage with an image from wine-making (chosen cleverly, for the cultivation of wine is not only a frequent biblical metaphor, but Württemberg is of course a wine-growing region): the wine has to be cleaned of undesirable substances to render it 'more enjoyable and more lasting'.<sup>28</sup>

This apologetic strategy also explains a frequent characteristic of his speeches: the numerous biblical quotations.<sup>29</sup> Of course, as a former

<sup>26</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> This is how Strauss, at the beginning of his second speech, sums up how his opponents presented him; Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> Without pretending to be exhaustive, biblical phrases occur at least on pp. 11, 14, 19, 23, 39, 40, 41, and 50 of his pamphlet.

student and indeed teaching assistant or *Repetent* of the famous Tübingen protestant seminary (where some fifty years earlier Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling were trained), Strauss knew his Bible almost by heart. But it is clear that he put this knowledge to a specific purpose. He quotes biblical phrases in order to show that he was not quite the atheist or antichrist his opponents tried to make out. His choice of biblical passages is often revealing in this context, for he preferred those that implied (or even explicitly asked for) recognition or at least toleration for the representatives of other religions or even non-believers. The following allusion to an epistle of St Paul (he does not give the reference, but the passage is easily identified: *NT*, Romans 2.14) is a good example:

Of course, I am neither Catholic nor Jew . . . I am not only of another confession but, they [i.e. his adversaries] say, an unbeliever. As you may have heard, a bird of my species may be called a philosopher. What that might mean, would take too long to explain right now; but assuming that a philosopher corresponds roughly to a gentile, of whom the Apostle says indeed: if the gentiles who do not possess [God's] law, execute by nature what the law prescribes . . . they might well be righteous men.<sup>30</sup>

Incidentally, Strauss does admit quite frankly that his many quotations from the Bible do not really serve a theological purpose, but are rather employed in order to clad his convictions (including his political ones) in a religiously inoffensive garb:

If it were permitted to draw a biblical phrase to the field of politics, I would like to call out to the Germans: Seek ye first the [political] unity [of Germany], the rest shall be added unto you. Indeed, the root of all the evils, from which our great and beautiful fatherland has suffered for centuries, was its division, its fragmentation.<sup>31</sup>

Beyond the immediate cause, Strauss' apologetic strategy in the face of his pietistic adversaries, there was also a wider reason for his 'theologicopolitical' title: since, according to Strauss, the substantial distinction between religion and politics was still being blurred (*verwischt*) by some protestant clergy in his native Württemberg, it remained necessary to expose the distinction and its consequences in a more fundamental, almost systematic manner. The most important consequence of the way in which he draws the distinction between religion and politics is that

<sup>30</sup> Strauß, *Volksreden*, p. 39, 'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves' (*NT*, Romans, 2.14; quoted from the King James Bible).

<sup>31</sup> Strauß, *Volksreden*, p. 14: Cf. *NT*, Mt. 6.33 (quoted from the King James Bible): 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'

'civic rights' should not 'depend upon religious confession'.<sup>32</sup> This point is of great importance to Strauss and he repeats it on several occasions in his speeches.<sup>33</sup> He not only pleads for the same civic rights for Catholics and the adherents of the different Protestant churches, but also for Jews and unbelievers (like himself). With civic rights he not only thinks of the right to vote, but also the rights to be elected and to exercise any function in the state, including that of a civil servant.<sup>34</sup>

The legal emancipation of the Jews was a particular concern for Strauss, as he insists repeatedly in his election speeches.<sup>35</sup> In order to fully grasp the progressive character of Strauss' position on the issue, it needs to be recalled that it still took more than sixteen years before a law came to grant in Württemberg something close to what Strauss was campaigning for in the spring of 1848.<sup>36</sup> His stance on this question assured Strauss the support of the Jewish population in and around Ludwigsburg.<sup>37</sup>

### *Perspectives from the Philosophy of History*

Another striking feature of Strauss' speeches is the world-historical perspective he applies to the situation of 1848. Already at the beginning of his first speech, he underlines the 'extraordinary times' opened up by the recent events and he emphasises the contrast to the preceding 'thirty years', during which time seemed to stand still and the people of Europe were engaged in a 'tiresome and unsuccessful struggle' for even the 'pettiest of rights'.<sup>38</sup> Counting back from 1848, the last 'thirty years' allude of course to the Restoration after Napoleon's second and definitive fall. The enthusiastic welcome that Strauss here gives in public to the new era corresponds well to the above-quoted (see note 14) cry of joy in his private correspondence.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27. <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* The issue is also raised on pp. 33, 40, 45.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28 and p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> A. Gerdmar, in his book *Roots of theological anti-Semitism: German biblical interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), on Strauss, pp. 121–31, in particular p. 128, draws upon a contemporary article by Strauss that appears to be unfavourable to the Jews, 'Judenverfolgung und Judenemanzipation' in *Jahrbücher der Gegenwart*, 30 April 1848, pp. 117–19 (A. Gerdmar kindly provided me with a copy of this article). While this complex article – Strauss pleads in favour of authorising intermarriage between Christians and Jews, along the lines of the *connubium* in Roman law, permitting marriage to non-Romans or *peregrini* – certainly deserves attention, it cannot by itself cast doubt on Strauss's option for Jewish emancipation.

<sup>36</sup> To be precise with a law of August 1864, 'Gesetz, betreffend die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse der israelitischen Glaubensgenossen.'

<sup>37</sup> Harraeus, *David Friedrich Strauß*, p. 208, reports that the residents of Aldingen, a nearby Jewish village, came to Ludwigsburg in support of Strauss.

<sup>38</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, pp. 11–12.

Yes indeed, an extraordinary time, a time of signs and wonders! The oldest men among us, though they have also lived through remarkable and eventful times, testify not to have seen such days. But this is saying little. Those who know history will say that, since the beginning of the world, such days have not yet occurred.<sup>39</sup>

That he praised the 'extraordinary times' again in biblical terms as a time of 'signs and wonders'<sup>40</sup> is of no surprise when seen in the light of his apologetic strategy explained above. What is more interesting is the fact that Strauss, in his evaluation of the *uniqueness* of the events of 1848, appears to echo Hegel's dithyrambic praise of the great French Revolution of 1789:

As long as the sun has stood in the firmament and the planets have revolved around it, it had never been observed that man stands on his head – i.e. [that his existence is based] on thought – and that he constructs actuality in accordance with it. Anaxagoras was the first to say that the world is governed by *nous*, but only now did people come to recognise that thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious dawn. All thinking beings shared in celebrating this epoch. A sublime emotion prevailed in those days; an enthusiasm of the spirit swept through the world as if the actual reconciliation of the divine with the world had only now been accomplished.<sup>41</sup>

Another formulation, using a term '*Ruck*' that Hegel had often employed to denote a sudden world-historical shift,<sup>42</sup> illustrates Strauss' Hegelian provenance:

a push/swoop [*Ruck*] in the West, a Western breeze: and all these rights [for which the people of Europe in general, and Württemberg in particular, have fought hard and often in vain] fall like ripe fruits into our laps.<sup>43</sup>

Strauss shares Hegel's conviction that the essential stimulus for the 'extraordinary time' in 1848 (like 1789 for Hegel) comes from the 'West', from revolutionary France, although Strauss also presents contemporary France as a potential adversary, or even an external threat for the German states.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* The expression 'signs and wonders' occurs frequently in the Bible, for example, Exodus 7.3; Deuteronomy 6.22; Matthew 24.24; Mark 13.22.

<sup>41</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, 'Lectures on the Philosophy of History (1827–1831)' in L. Dickey & H. B. Nisbet: *Political writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 215. The German original is to be found in G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* in E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (eds.), *Theorie-Werkausgabe Hegel GWF*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 529 (henceforth, *Hegel, TWA*).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Hegel, TWA*, vol. 19, p. 488. <sup>43</sup> *Strauss, Volksreden*, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> At times, Strauss seems worried about the military exploits of France in Algeria. The French conquest of Algeria, which started in 1830, had reached its conclusion just a few months earlier, with the capitulation of Abd-el-Kader El Djezairi on 22 December 1847; cf. *Strauss, Volksreden*, p. 18 and see also pp. 25, 33, 54.

But neither his joy over the recent developments nor his satisfaction about leaving the stagnation and decline of the Restoration behind led Strauss to an excess of enthusiasm. Strauss is rather prudent and recommends beginning with a consolidation of recent achievements before tackling the tasks of the future.<sup>45</sup> In line with such moderation, Strauss ends his first speech (as the start of his campaign this must have been particularly important to him) with a slogan which recalls Kant: 'Fortschritt, der sich nicht überstürzt! Freiheit, die sich selber Gesetz ist!' (Progress that does not rush! Freedom that is to itself law!)<sup>46</sup>

Strauss' application of a world-historical perspective to the situation of 1848 is not limited to the preface and the first of his speeches, but can be found frequently in the published version of his speeches. Three further examples may illustrate this point. In his third speech (delivered on 22 April 1848 in Markgröningen) Strauss alludes to a local celebrity, Ludwig Friedrich Heyd (1792–1842), not only to benefit from the latter's popularity, but also in order to extend his political convictions backwards to the Reformation and the Peasants' Wars – Heyd was the author of a book on Ulrich I (1487–1550), count of Württemberg.<sup>47</sup> Maintaining that he had strong affinities with Heyd's political views, Strauss sees in the latter's presentation of Count Ulrich a 'warning' against the arbitrariness of princes, a warning that for Strauss remains obviously valid for the Restoration, and in Heyd's evaluation of the Peasants' War a sympathy for such 'moderate and conciliating' individuals as Matern Feuerbacher and an antipathy for 'blood-thirsty' radicals like Jakob Rohrbach. Transferring Heyd's political opinions to the present, Strauss claims that the local historian would have preferred the current moderates (Strauss mentions Uhland, Pfizer, Mathy, and Bassermann) and not the radicals (Rau, Hecker, and Struve).<sup>48</sup> This rapprochement to the

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 12 f, 'Our children and grandchildren would think of us with contempt, and curse our memory, if we failed to collect the fruit at our feet with care and to preserve them for the benefit of posterity. If we were not to take possession of the rights and advantages [now] at our disposal and consolidate them for all future times.'

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19; cf. p. 45 f (fifth speech), 'Fortschritt ohne Umsturz ist mein Wahlspruch.' (Progress without overthrow is my slogan.) For the reference to Kant it might be sufficient to recall the Kantian conception of freedom under laws (by contrast to an 'untamed', 'wild', 'brutal' freedom); cf. Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Academy edition = *Kant, AA*) (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1900), vol. VI, p. 316; vol. VIII, pp. 22, 24, 357. One of Kant's reflexions on moral philosophy contains *verbatim* a formulation of freedom that is a law to itself (Freiheit, die 'sich selbst ... Gesetz ist') (*Kant, AA*, vol. 19, p. 180, no. 6854).

<sup>47</sup> W. Heyd, 'Heyd, Ludwig Friedrich', in *ADB*, vol. 12 (1880), pp. 345–6; cf. L.F. Heyd, *Ulrich, Herzog zu Württemberg: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Württembergs und des deutschen Reichs im Zeitalter der Reformation*. 3 vols. (Tübingen: L.F. Fues 1841–44).

<sup>48</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 31. Ludwig Uhland (1787–1862) and Paul Pfizer (1801–67) were from Württemberg, while Karl Mathy (1807–68) and Friedrich Bassermann (1811–55)

‘moderates’ is of course significant for the image Strauss wanted to show and also for the evaluation of Strauss’ political stance.

A second example is the way in which Strauss, in his fifth speech, strengthens his views, outlined above, on the legal equality of different religions (including Jews, free-thinkers, and atheists) when referring to the evils of the Thirty Years’ War. In this he states that old quarrels between different religions hurt Germany for centuries and, although the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 ended the religious war, ‘hatred, mistrust, and intolerance’ persist. According to Strauss,<sup>49</sup> the lesson which ought to be drawn from such historical experiences is to show respect and recognition to other religions (Jewish, Catholic, Protestant) and convictions (Strauss spells out ‘Lichtfreund’<sup>50</sup> and ‘philosopher’).<sup>51</sup>

A third example is when Strauss expounds the demand for equal civic rights to members of all faiths, or when he describes the abolition of witch-hunting. Such achievements are direct historical consequences of the Enlightenment.<sup>52</sup>

## II The Concrete Programme and Measures Advocated

After discussing the two main themes of Strauss’ speeches in the [previous section](#), we can thus identify the essential elements of Strauss’ political programme. German unity and freedom (*Einheit und Freiheit*) are unquestionably the twin pillars of his political thought. Insignificant local allegiances (e.g. Prussians, Bavarians) were to be abandoned in favour of national citizenship, and likewise full participation should be granted to those subjected to rule and governance by others.<sup>53</sup>

Political unity is a guarantee of safety from invasion by foreign powers – this is obviously an allusion to Napoleon’s pitting one German territory against another.<sup>54</sup> Strauss does not seek any unity, and certainly not the

from neighbouring Baden; all four were members of the National Assembly in Frankfurt. The three politicians whom Strauss considered too radical were Gottlieb Rau (1816–54), Friedrich Hecker (1811–81) and Gustav Struve (1805–70).

<sup>49</sup> The following is a paraphrase of Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 44 f.

<sup>50</sup> Unless Strauss is using ‘Lichtfreund’ (literally, a friend of light) as a synonym of ‘a friend of the enlightenment’, which seems unlikely, he was probably thinking of the movement, founded in 1841 by Leberecht Uhlich (1799–1872), and active in central Germany in general and in Magdeburg in particular, to which its adversaries gave the name of ‘Lichtfreunde’. At least certain of the theological (rationalist reinterpretations of miracles) and political (in favour of a constitutional monarchy) options of the movement were close to those of Strauss.

<sup>51</sup> Strauss used the term of ‘philosopher’ in order to refer to atheists, unbelievers and pagans; cf. Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18, ‘when no Confederation of the Rhine [Rheinbund] supports the French any longer against German brothers’.

'impotent phantom' (*machtloser Schatten*)<sup>55</sup> associated with that end of the 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation' which Hegel had already diagnosed in 1799,<sup>56</sup> when a 'stroke of the [French invader's] pen' sufficed to compel the resignation of the German emperor [Franz/Francis II].<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the 'ghostlike rest' of a unity embodied by the Germanic Confederation,<sup>58</sup> according to Strauss, could lead only to servitude.<sup>59</sup> But Strauss disliked unity along French lines even more: he saw the Jacobin centralised power strangling any specificity and particularity, even the most harmless.<sup>60</sup> According to Strauss, Baden, Bavaria, and his native Württemberg might well remain or even constitute separate entities within regional governments and have their own princes, provided a central power stood above them, a real head (*Oberhaupt*), endowed with all the privileges and means of force necessary to compel and preserve unity.<sup>61</sup>

Before explaining the second pillar of his political creed, freedom, it should be clarified who the head or chief might be that Strauss had in mind. Since his option on the issue – in favour of Prussia and the Prussian king – was likely to be misunderstood by his electors, Strauss explains himself in detail (over two pages in the printed version of his speeches). He tries to de-emotionalise the question, by treating it in a matter-of-fact way.<sup>62</sup> His first reason derives from the fact that all princes are and must be territorial sovereigns (*Gebietsherren*). In order to become head of a larger entity, it is necessary that the territory of the prince who might pretend to this role be sufficiently large and able to dominate 'smaller' princes – this prerequisite left only Prussia and Austria in the running. But, according to Strauss, Austria was a multi-ethnic entity in decomposition and decline, whereas Prussia (with the exception of its Polish territory) consisted of exclusively German provinces and thus, already, in terms of strength and power, the balance pointed clearly to Prussia. Since Strauss did not wish to leave the decision to considerations of power alone, he added that Prussia was distinguished further by recent cultural achievements – doubtless encouraged by his own study trip to Berlin, where he could hear Hegel

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>56</sup> Hegel, *TWA*, vol. 1, p. 452 (cf. also p. 505), 'Germany is a state no longer.'

<sup>57</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> The Germanic Confederation, created by the Congress of Vienna (1815), was a loose association of thirty-nine German states. It lasted until the creation of the North German Confederation in 1866.

<sup>59</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 18. <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14 & p. 46; cf. p. 25.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15, 'Where to find the [political] head? That question too I find rather easy, provided one disregards particular interest and personal preference or aversion, and sticks with a clear mind to what the circumstances require.'



and Schleiermacher, among others.<sup>63</sup> Yet he remained acutely aware of obstacles to his preference: in political terms, Prussia had not only a long tradition of backwardness,<sup>64</sup> but it had recently (on 18/19 March, only a month before his speeches) crushed the Berlin uprising by the most brutal means (killing around 270 protestors). The current king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who had been in power since 1840, looked a particularly inappropriate leader of German unity and *freedom*. Strauss does not play down the recent events – he twice employs emotionally laden terms: ‘bloodbath’ and ‘a terrible bloody sacrifice’.<sup>65</sup> He even calls the king’s rapid change of mind – from feudal to constitutional monarch – as ‘suspicious’ (*verdächtig*).<sup>66</sup> Intending to convince his audience that he did not have much sympathy for the Prussian king, Strauss reminds them of previous publications in which he had severely criticised Friedrich Wilhelm IV.<sup>67</sup> But Strauss insists on several occasions that the institutional framework is of greater significance than the character of this king (or any other): once constitutional government is introduced and has gained some solidity, the personality of the prince is less potentially harmful, even irrelevant.<sup>68</sup> The constitutional framework would limit and check the king’s arbitrary whims. Even the Prussian king, when surrounded by capable and responsible ministers – Strauss names Hansemann and Camphausen<sup>69</sup> – would be rendered harmless. Strauss’ option in favour of Prussia and even in favour of Friedrich Wilhelm IV must thus not be separated from his constitutional convictions, for only a consolidated constitutional government can prevent abuse of power. In the context of Württemberg and of south-west German liberalism in general, it is worth mentioning that Strauss refers to Paul Pfizer (see note 48) as a model.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* ‘Preußen war in der Entwicklung politischer Freiheit lange hinter dem südwestlichen Deutschland zurück’.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16, ‘Blutbad in Berlin’, p. 17, ‘ein schreckliches, blutiges Opfer’.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. The ‘sudden change’ is an allusion to the fact that the king professed adherence to the constitution on 21 March 1848, only three days after having allowed the massacre of the men on the barricades.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17. Indeed, just a year earlier Strauss had published *Der Romantiker auf dem Throne der Caesaren oder Julian der Abtrünnige* (cf. note 10) and in 1843 he had already contributed to Herwegh’s *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (cf. note 9), both texts highly critical of Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17 f.

<sup>69</sup> David Hansemann (1790–1864) was the minister of finance of two Prussian governments in 1848. Ludolf Camphausen (1803–90) was the prime minister of Prussia from 29 March to 20 June 1848. For both, realisation of the constitutional program was a vital element of their political aspirations.

<sup>70</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 18. Pfizer represented the town of Tübingen from 1833–1838 in the Stuttgart Assembly and, in the local government of 1848 under Friedrich Römers (1794–1864), held the office of minister of culture and education. Cf. F. Raberg, ‘Pfizer, Paul Achatius’, in *NDB*, vol. 20, p. 343; C. Kennert, *Die Gedankenwelt des Paul*

With his book *Briefwechsel zweier Deutschen*<sup>71</sup> Pfizer was indeed one of the first liberals of south-west Germany to express himself in favour of the 'lesser German' solution with regard to the question of a union and under Prussian leadership.

Strauss hoped that the intended unity of Germany would not only lead to security from foreign invasion, but also to the 'flowering of freedom within'.<sup>72</sup> As Strauss, already in his slogan (see note 46), had, like Kant, defined 'freedom' as under laws, and not unbounded freedom, it will come as no surprise that here he does not extend the achievements of 1848 to full sovereignty of the people. One of his formulations might be interpreted in this sense,<sup>73</sup> but most other passages suggest a more moderate conclusion, in general using expressions that demand effective participation rather than grant exclusive rights to the representative assembly.<sup>74</sup> Strauss is advocating not a republic, but a constitutional monarchy.<sup>75</sup> His projects for a future constitution of Germany seem to imply two chambers, with, a 'house of princes' (*Fürstenrat*) alongside the House of Representatives.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, his conception of freedom should not be underestimated. His experience of his own marginalisation as a critic of religion shaped his fundamental conviction that political rights should not depend upon any religious creed.

Among other aspects of his conception of freedom, the suggestion of a uniform code of law for Germany and his demand that all trials be open to the public deserve attention.<sup>77</sup> By his insistence on a code of law Strauss is not only advocating the much-needed unification of the different legal systems in the numerous German territories,<sup>78</sup> but he also seems to be alluding to the famous dispute about the codification of 1814 primarily associated with Anton F. J. Thibaut and Friedrich Carl von Savigny.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Strauss seems to be following Hegel's lead, for the philosopher, in the famous section 211 (and others) of his *Philosophy*

*Achatius Pfizer: Eine Studie zum Denken des deutschen Frühliberalismus* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1986).

<sup>71</sup> P. A. Pfizer, *Briefwechsel zweier Deutschen, und Ziel und Aufgaben des deutschen Liberalismus* (Cotta, 1831). The Prussian option is clearly expressed on pp. 196–202 and 224–34.

<sup>72</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 18.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26 'die Sendung der Abgeordneten nach Frankfurt bedeutet auch, dass wir uns ferner nicht mehr nur regieren lassen, sondern uns selbst regieren wollen.'

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 'mitsprechen' pp. 24 & 35; 'mitberathen, mitordnen', p. 26.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 25. <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46. <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46; cf. p. 35.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26, 'nicht mehr am Main anders gerichtet werde als an der Neckar, nicht mehr an der Donau verboten sey, was am Rhein erlaubt ist'.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. J. Rückert, 'Thibaut – Savigny – 9 Gans. Der Streit zwischen "historischer" und "philosophischer Rechtsschule"' in R. Blänkner, G. Göhler & N. Waszek (eds.), *Eduard Gans (1797–1839): Politischer Professor zwischen Restauration und Vormärz* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), pp. 247–311.

of *Right* had already expressed his opposition to Savigny.<sup>80</sup> Even the older debate was largely politicised and there is a strong continuity from it to the *Vormärz* debates about legal unity and a new code of law.<sup>81</sup> With his vindication of *public* court procedures with juries,<sup>82</sup> Strauss is in unison with a classical demand of the 1848 movement,<sup>83</sup> which also found its way into the constitutional document of 28 March 1849 of the Frankfurt Assembly: see sections 143.3 and 179.2. But again, Strauss' Hegelian heritage ought to be underlined here: Hegel had already argued for the public administration of justice and trial by jury.<sup>84</sup>

The Hegelian impact on Strauss was even stronger in the questions on poverty. It is well known that the question of how to remedy poverty 'tormented' Hegel.<sup>85</sup> Strauss, too, marks the transition from the intended political freedom to the social problems of the late 1840s with an emphatic: 'What use is freedom to the people, when they suffer from hunger and cold?'<sup>86</sup> In his brief but important treatment of social problems, Strauss insists upon their fundamental character and outlines at least some approaches towards a possible solution. That the extension of political rights which he expected from the National Assembly in Frankfurt depends upon social preconditions in as much as a building needs solid foundations is obvious for Strauss. Such preconditions are better education and improvement of material conditions for the people.<sup>87</sup> To relieve poverty is a particularly urgent task to Strauss.<sup>88</sup> The state has to protect workers against 'unjust pressure' from employers.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Hegel, *TWA*, vol. 7, p. 363 f.

<sup>81</sup> C. Schöler, *Deutsche Rechtseinheit. Partikulare und nationale Gesetzgebung (1780–1866)* (Böhlau, 2004), p. 132 f; and more fundamentally: D. Klippel, 'Die Philosophie der Gesetzgebung. Naturrecht und Rechtsphilosophie als Gesetzgebungswissenschaft im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert' in B. Dölemeyer and D. Klippel (eds.), *Gesetz und Gesetzgebung im Europa der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1998), pp. 225–47.

<sup>82</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 35, 'damit kein Deutscher mehr hinter verschlossenen Thüren und nach stummen Akten gerichtet werde'.

<sup>83</sup> The entry on 'jury trial' (*Geschworenengericht*) in a slightly earlier encyclopaedia gives a good summary of the contemporary debate: *Brockhaus Bilder-Conversations-Lexikon*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1838), pp. 204–6 – can be consulted online: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20000829927>.

<sup>84</sup> Hegel, *TWA*, vol. 7, section 224 and the addition to section 227, pp. 376 f. & 379 f.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, section 244 & p. 390.

<sup>86</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, p. 28, 'Doch was hilft dem Volke die Freiheit, wenn es hungert? Wenn es friert?'.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27, 'Diese Grundlagen sind vor Allem geistige und sittliche Bildung und materielle Erleichterung des Volks.' How to improve education is dealt with later on, cf. pp. 42 and 47.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48 and cf. p. 35, 'Ein besonderes Augenmerk wird der deutsche Reichstag auf die Erleichterung der Noth in den unteren Klassen zu richten haben.'

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28, 'Die Arbeiter müssen gegen ungerechten Druck von Seiten der Arbeitgeber geschützt werden.'

Strauss does not pretend that he (or the Assembly in Frankfurt) could work miracles – as in the land of Cockaigne,<sup>90</sup> he presents and explains several measures that might help, excluding, to begin with, such inappropriate means as the nationalisation of industries and that ‘brutal prohibition of any competition being tested in France’. It is in this context that Strauss mentions Louis Blanc as the propagator of such doubtful therapies: ‘Louis Blanc proceeds like a charlatan, not a thorough doctor, and the harmful consequences of his fake cure will not fail to appear.’<sup>91</sup> Among more appropriate means to help the needy, Strauss comments on fiscal policies that would distribute public charges more evenly and abandon old privileges.<sup>92</sup> Hegel had suggested (in sections 246–48 of his *Philosophy of Right*),<sup>93</sup> a search for new markets as an answer to over-production, as well as ‘systematic’ (meaning state organised) colonisation in order to reduce ‘surplus population’, and Strauss speaks of an ‘opening of overseas markets’ and state-aided emigration.<sup>94</sup>

In no less than three central passages Strauss then introduces as a new bearer of hope – and this argument deserves to stand as the conclusion to his discussion of possible remedies of poverty – the concept of ‘Association’. Towards the end of his second speech Strauss uses the term for the first time merely as a slogan without clear definition or sufficient explanation.<sup>95</sup> But when he comes back to the concept – he also calls it a ‘principle’ with a promising future – in his third and fifth speeches the meaning he wants it to bear becomes clearer. In his third speech, he begins by recommending that the state ought to encourage and facilitate cost-cutting through master craftsmen of the same trade combining respective businesses. This preliminary remark already gives an image of the voluntary and harmonious co-operation Strauss envisages when he turns to associations as an institution to organise work fraternally with mutual provisioning.<sup>96</sup> His fifth speech adds further elements:

Another means to relive [needy workmen] lies in the principle of association, through which workers can provide themselves with food at lower prices, and with care and attention when sick. With contributions from employers on the one hand and small deductions from wages on the other, and support from the state, it will

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37, ‘der Reichstag in Frankfurt [wird nicht] bewirken könne, dass fortan allen Deutschen die gebratenen Tauben in den Mund fliegen’.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48. Though this is the only time Strauss mentions Louis Blanc explicitly, he seems to be alluding to him in other places, e.g. p. 37.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35; cf. pp. 28 and 46. <sup>93</sup> Hegel, *TWZ*, vol. 7, sections 246–48, pp. 391–93.

<sup>94</sup> Strauss, *Volksreden*, pp. 47 and 49.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28, ‘es muss ihnen [den Arbeitern] Anleitung gegeben werden, durch Association ihr Loos sich selbst zu erleichtern’.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36, ‘Princip der Association, der verbrüdernden Arbeit und gegenseitigen Versorgung’.

be possible to create health insurance and pension funds for the elderly and workers in poor health.<sup>97</sup>

Even though, as may well be objected, all this does not really amount to a systematic definition of the concept of ‘association’, Strauss’ aims can be grasped: a coalition of the underprivileged that will allow them to organise mutual aid (food at lower prices – probably by collective bargaining, buying wholesale, etc.) and some form of social insurance – and long before those were finally institutionalised by an elderly Bismarck under pressure. Obviously, such projects do not make Strauss a revolutionary and the paternalist undertone with which Strauss presents his palliatives is at times hard to swallow. Yet in advocating measures of social protection that only became reality decades later and have for a century remained pillars of the social system, he hardly warrants the title ‘reactionary’.

Irrespective of any final evaluation of his political ideas, with his use of the term ‘association’ Strauss does not diverge far from Hegel. Hegel’s close friend and collaborator Eduard Gans, whom Strauss had met when studying in Berlin, used the term ‘association’ as early as 1836<sup>98</sup> in order to achieve a kind of synthesis of Hegel’s theory of corporation and elements from Saint-Simon and Fourier and reach conclusions that look to anticipate trade unionist perspectives.<sup>99</sup>

As Hegel has been identified as a major source of Strauss’ political options, one might conclude with a hypothetical and somewhat heretical question: would Hegel, had he lived in 1848 and with all his farsightedness, have thought and acted differently from Strauss and taken a more radical stance? However ‘progressive’ Hegel’s texts might be interpreted, it seems unlikely he would have shown more sympathy for Robert Blum and Louis Blanc than Strauss. This would mean that Strauss, though not more radical than Hegel, was not more reactionary either.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>98</sup> E. Gans, *Rückblicke auf Personen und Zustände* [1836], edited with introduction, notes and bibliography by N. Waszek (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995), p. 101.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. N. Waszek, ‘Eduard Gans on Poverty and on the Constitutional Debate’ in D. Moggach (ed.), *The New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 24–49, in particular pp. 38–41.

*Diana Siclovan*

### **I Introduction**

By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, it had become increasingly difficult to pin down what ‘German socialism’ stood for. On the one hand, there were the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that were attracting an international following. Despite the fact that they had developed the majority of their ideas in exile, their ‘Marxism’ was still widely perceived as a distinctly German contribution to radical thought. On the other hand, there was the more domestic German tradition of social democracy. Under the leadership of Ferdinand Lassalle, a political working-class movement developed in Germany in the 1860s. It was founded on the belief that socialist goals could be achieved in co-operation with the state – a strategy that Marx decisively rejected.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the history of German socialism reached a new and important chapter with Otto von Bismarck’s social insurance laws of the 1880s, which made the German Empire the first European nation to feature such comprehensive social legislation.

That Germany would by the end of the century become a pioneer of social ideas and practice had seemed unlikely in the early 1800s. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the German states were considered among the most politically and economically backward areas of Western Europe. While France was experiencing recurring revolutions, the politics of its neighbouring German Confederation were conspicuously quiet. Only a few of the southern states introduced constitutions in the early nineteenth century. Otherwise democratic structures – or, indeed, a powerful public demand for them – were absent in the Confederation. Germans, according to a national stereotype, had little interest in politics, preferring to focus on parochial affairs or lofty intellectual pursuits like idealist philosophy and romantic literature.

<sup>1</sup> See most famously the attack in K. Marx, ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme’ in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975–2004) [subsequently *MECW*], vol. XXIV (1989).

Moreover, Germany was until the middle of the century barely industrialised, making it an unlikely place to produce a workers' movement.

Even the Revolution of 1848 seemingly failed to bring about Germany's political awakening. Although many Germans considered themselves socialists by that point, socialist goals only played a marginal role during the revolutionary upheaval. Many participants – even those on the far left – supported the introduction of a constitutional monarchy in a newly united Germany. Despite its relatively modest demands, the German Revolution quickly resulted in failure. The Frankfurt Assembly and the Prussian National Assembly proved powerless, and a conservative backlash was underway from autumn 1848. By 1851, even the 'Basic Rights for the German People' that had been granted in December 1848 were revoked. Conservative forces again dominated in the 1850s, the alleged dark 'decade of reaction'.

The defeat of 1848 presented a crushing blow to the great majority of Germany's socialists. In addition to struggling with life in exile and persecution,<sup>2</sup> they also had to come to terms with an intellectual failure. The Russian-German intellectual Alexander Herzen in *From the Other Shore* articulated most eloquently what was a common belief in the years after 1848: that the failure of the revolution could be blamed on the idealism of its leaders, whose abstract ideas were far removed from reality.<sup>3</sup> 1848 was retrospectively widely considered a 'revolution of the intellectuals'.<sup>4</sup> This was, for example, also Marx and Engels' interpretation of 1848. In the mid-1840s they had developed a critique of idealism and begun advocating a proletarian revolution that was driven by material conditions. After 1848, they commonly blamed the lack of class cohesion for the failure of the revolution.<sup>5</sup> In their works from the 1850s, they sought to provide a 'scientific' explanation for the inevitability of the fall of capitalism. When Engels looked back on the development of socialism across the nineteenth century in 1880, he presented a straightforward scheme of development: up to 1848, an idealistic and 'utopian' variety was prevalent that, proven powerless in the course of the revolution, was replaced by a superior, 'scientific' variety in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See C. Lattek, *Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> A. Herzen, *From the Other Shore; and, The Russian People and Socialism*, M. Budberg and R. Wollheim (trans.), introduction by I. Berlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> See L. Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1946] 1992).

<sup>5</sup> See Engels, 'Letters from France' and Marx, 'The Class Struggles in France', *MECW*, vol. X (1978).

<sup>6</sup> See Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', *MECW*, Vol. XXIV (1989).



Yet, this explanation does not suffice to explain the relative strength of German socialism by the end of the nineteenth century, not least because Marxism was only a relatively small part of it and in fact stronger in many other European countries than in Germany. To make sense of especially the rise of German 'state socialism' in the 1870s and 1880s, another interpretation of the German experience of 1848 seems more appropriate, one that has long been obscured by the predominance of a Marxist reading of 1848 and the history of nineteenth-century socialism more broadly. Instead of seeing 1848 as a disappointment and a clear breaking point, this chapter considers an interpretation that stresses the continuities in the development of German socialism across the 1840s and 1850s, as well as the vitality of many of the ideas developed in the 1850s, the supposed 'decade of reaction'. This reading follows an interpretation that was already put forward by a contemporary observer: Lorenz von Stein, a now obscure theorist whose work in fact contains one of the most astute analyses of the impact of 1848 on German socialism. Already in the early 1840s, Stein saw promising elements of an influential socialist movement in Germany's intellectual and political tradition. The events of 1848 – rather than bringing disillusionment – according to Stein in fact reaffirmed those strands and allowed them to flourish in decades after the revolution.

## **II The Emergence of German Socialism in the 1840s**

In the early 1840s, many parts of the German Confederation saw a sudden rise in interest in socialist ideas. The background to this was a crisis of left Hegelianism, the radical philosophical critique developed since the mid-1830s by figures like Arnold Ruge, Bruno Bauer, and Ludwig Feuerbach. Originally a religious critique, its political implications were becoming increasingly vocal by 1840. Drawing on the thought of G. F. W. Hegel, the left Hegelians challenged the belief that Prussia was an inherently progressive nation by virtue of its Protestant universality, and called for the introduction of constitutionalism and democracy. Meanwhile, knowledge of the ideas of French socialists like Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and their respective followers was spreading across Germany. In the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1830, German visitors to Paris regularly reported on the activities of the Saint-Simonian clubs in the domestic press.<sup>7</sup> The members of the radical

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of these works see C. Quesel, *Soziologie und Soziale Frage: Lorenz von Stein und die Entstehung der Gesellschaftswissenschaft in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 1989), pp.12–19.

literary movement Young Germany, for example, took a special interest in socialism, yet without putting it in concrete relation to the social and political conditions in their country.<sup>8</sup> By 1840 the neologism 'Sozialist' entered the German language.<sup>9</sup>

It was the left Hegelians' first serious encounter with socialism that marked the beginning of a German socialist tradition – a moment that can be located with some precision in the autumn of 1842. This was when the young legal scholar Lorenz von Stein published his work, *The Socialism and Communism of Contemporary France*. Originally from Schleswig and of humble origins, Stein became close to the left Hegelian Arnold Ruge in the late 1830s. In 1841 he went to Paris to study French law, but ended up spending most of his time there researching French socialism, which he developed a great interest in.<sup>10</sup> His 1842 book, written hastily over the course of only a few months, provided an overview of the different schools of socialist thought that had emerged in France since the early nineteenth century. Stein claimed that the different socialist traditions all stemmed from a deeper intellectual source: the demand for more equality in society. While communism was a destructive and dangerous doctrine that he rejected, Stein argued that socialism was a phenomenon of real substance that had to be taken seriously.<sup>11</sup>

Stein crucially also presented an original argument about socialism's relevance to Germany. A major problem for German radicals like the left Hegelians at the time was the issue of how Germany could develop a progressive political movement despite its lack of democratic structures.<sup>12</sup> Stein claimed that socialism was primarily a national phenomenon. The ideas he described in his book had arisen from the specific course of French history and had much to do with the distinct French national character. Yet, he also argued that in line with the Hegelian notion of the evolving logic of history, these ideas were inevitably bound to reach other European countries in due course.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See E. M. Butler, *The Saint-Simonian Religion in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926).

<sup>9</sup> E. Czobel, 'Zur Verbreitung der Worte Sozialist und Sozialismus' in *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus*, 3 (1913).

<sup>10</sup> On how Stein's interest in socialism was also motivated by his work as a spy for the Prussian government, see J. Grolle, 'Lorenz von Stein als preussischer Geheimagent' in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 50 (1968).

<sup>11</sup> L. von Stein, *Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1842), iii.

<sup>12</sup> W. Breckman, 'Diagnosing the "German Misery": Radicalism and the problem of national character, 1830–1848' in D. E. Barclay and E. D. Weitz (eds), *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1900* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Stein, *Sozialismus und Communismus*, iii–iv.

The specific shape of socialism in Germany, Stein admitted, might differ from the French example. Yet, its impact and ‘world-historical’ significance would be just as profound.

A central goal of Stein’s book was therefore to prepare his compatriots for the imminent arrival of socialism in their country. In fact, Stein even claimed that Germans already possessed the resources to create a ‘response’ to socialism – namely an academic ‘science of society’. Since the eighteenth century, German monarchs had been influenced by Cameralist thinking, a vision of kingly rule that focused on creating public wealth and notably involved social welfare provisions. This philosophical tradition had given rise to the academic discipline of *Staatswissenschaft*, a kind of political science with a distinctly practical focus, training future civil servants in a wide range of subjects from law to agriculture.<sup>14</sup> Stein suggested that, given the social developments of the early nineteenth century, this discipline should now be extended to the social. Through the academic study of social tensions and socialist demands, German *Wissenschaft* could develop new strategies for public policy. A state-led response to social problems could, according to Stein, prevent a descent into violent revolution as in France.<sup>15</sup>

Stein’s argument about the German monarchies’ suitedness to undermine socialist revolution enraged the left Hegelians. Stein’s book was widely discussed upon publication and – completely contrary to his intentions – helped give rise to a new tradition of radicalism. In the year preceding its publication, the left Hegelians had become increasingly divided about their political strategy. Bruno Bauer, a university lecturer, promoted a controversial brand of republicanism that required citizens to relinquish their individualism in order to participate in politics.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Ludwig Feuerbach, in his 1841 *The Essence of Christianity*, outlined a compelling humanist vision in which self-fulfilment constituted the goal of politics.<sup>17</sup> Bauer’s criticism of Prussia cost him his lectureship in March 1842. This event demonstrated to the wider-circle left Hegelians that this autocratic state was unlikely to implement democratic reforms – and made Stein’s argument appear particularly farcical. As Bauer observed in retrospect, by the time Stein’s book was published, German radicals had begun to ‘turn against the state’.

<sup>14</sup> See K. Tribe, *Strategies of Economic Order: German Economic Discourse, 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 2. ‘Cameralism and the science of government’.

<sup>15</sup> Stein, *Socialismus und Communismus*, iv–v, pp. 444–47.

<sup>16</sup> See D. Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, G. Eliot (trans.) (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2008).

Although they were therefore not convinced by his account of a state-led response to socialism, his detailed account of French socialism pointed them to an alternative carrier of change – the proletariat.<sup>18</sup>

The crucial figure in the development of a distinctly German idea of socialism was Moses Hess. A philosophical autodidact from a religious Jewish background, Hess in 1841 published his work *The European Triarchy*. It addressed the issue of how Germany could make its contribution to progressive politics and was well received among the left Hegelians.<sup>19</sup> When Stein's book was published, Hess immediately set out to write a critical review of it. He dismissed Stein's call for a 'science of society' as a paternalistic, reactionary response to the social question, claiming that Stein's narrow academic background made him blind to the broader dimension of socialist ambition: that of all-encompassing human emancipation.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to Stein, Hess's aim was to go beyond the state. This, he believed, could be achieved through an alliance of German humanism and France's materialist philosophy. The German idealist tradition, according to Hess, matched French socialism in importance. Hegel had introduced the important idea that human freedom was not located in individualistic pursuits but in community.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Germany's atheistic thought inherently advocated radical change, as ambitions for a better life could not be delegated to the hereafter. Linked with recent French ideas about labour, this line of philosophical development would, Hess believed, imminently give rise to a 'philosophy of the act'. Confronted with striking social grievances, political philosophers would abandon their theoretical endeavours and start advocating 'activity', fulfilling labour carried out by socially and politically conscious individuals. In his review of Stein, Hess thus used Feuerbachian humanism to devise an anti-statist radical alternative to Bauer's republicanism. This was the first articulation of an idea of 'German socialism'.

The publication of Hess's review in summer 1843 coincided with the arrest of the workers' leader Wilhelm Weitling in Switzerland, which additionally provoked interest in socialism in Germany.<sup>22</sup> As Hess

<sup>18</sup> B. Bauer, *Vollständige Geschichte der Partheikämpfe in Deutschland während der Jahre 1842–1846* (Charlottenberg: Bauer, 1847), p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> [M. Hess], *Die europäische Triarchie* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841).

<sup>20</sup> [M. Hess], 'Sozialismus und Kommunismus' in G. Herwegh (ed.), *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (Zürich and Winterthur: Verlag des Literararischen Comptoirs, 1843), p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>22</sup> His subversive activity was recounted in the police report published by J. C. Bluntschli (ed.), *Die Kommunisten in der Schweiz nach den bei Weitling vorgefundenen Papieren* (Zürich: Druck von Orell, Füssli, und Comp., 1843).

observed, from this time 'Germany's best minds were won over by socialism.'<sup>23</sup> Over the coming months, many German authors began exploring socialist ideas, a trend that intensified even further when one year later the Silesian weavers' uprising suggested the ultimate arrival of class conflict in Germany.<sup>24</sup> The events of summer 1844 led to the establishment of the first workers' associations (*Arbeitervereine*) and triggered an explosion of radical publications across the German states. The socialist vision promoted in journals like the *Rheinische Jahrbücher*, *Westphälisches Dampfboot*, and *Gesellschaftsspiegel* was anti-statist and humanistic, following the criticism of Stein's argument articulated by Hess. Socialism was considered not just a charity initiative, but an opportunity for wider social reform. A key concept was '*Vergesellschaftung*', the project of creating a more cohesive and harmonious society that echoed Feuerbach's humanism. As one writer put it, the 'philosophy of socialism' allowed society to '[regain] the human ... this human wants to lead a life worthy of his species being, a life of unification, of *Vergesellschaftung*'.<sup>25</sup> This ideal was opposed both to revolutionary violence and to paternalistic statism. It was a reformist grassroots movement that believed that change could only be achieved slowly and by focusing on educational measures.

The German socialists largely rejected politics, even when it was of a democratic variety. As constitutionalism had failed in France, they believed that the German socialist project should be about more profound social change. This position was perhaps most prominently articulated by Karl Grün, a radical journalist who 'converted' to socialism after reading Moses Hess' 'Philosophy of the Act' and Karl Marx's 'On the Jewish Question' in early 1844.<sup>26</sup> In his 1845 essay 'Politics and Socialism', Grün wrote:

A politician cannot be a socialist. He can only become one if he stops being a politician. The concept of a politician is a narrow, exclusive one ... Once the concept of politics has been defined, all other actions revolve around it. The socialist by contrast ... addresses the very questions the politician is incapable of solving.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> M. Hess, 'Über die sozialistische Bewegung in Deutschland' in K. Grün (ed.), *Neue Anekdoten* (Darmstadt: Leske, 1845), p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> See C. von Hadenberg, *Aufstand der Weber: Die Revolte von 1844 und ihr Aufstieg zum Mythos* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997), p. 138.

<sup>25</sup> K. Grün, 'Feuerbach und die Sozialisten' in H. Püttmann (ed.), *Deutsches Bürgerbuch für 1845* (Darmstadt: Leske, 1845), pp. 74–75.

<sup>26</sup> Both essays were published in the first and only issue of A. Ruge and K. Marx (eds.) *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris: Im Bureau der Jahrbücher, 1844).

<sup>27</sup> K. Grün, 'Politik und Sozialismus' in H. Püttmann (ed.), *Rheinische Jahrbücher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform* (Darmstadt: Leske, 1845), 142. Translations are, unless otherwise indicated, my own.

Otto Lünig, a doctor turned radical journalist who edited the journal *Westphälisches Dampfboot* in the mid-1840s, published an essay with an identical title that also stressed that the German variety of socialism clearly departed from the French example. As he wrote, the new era was no longer concerned with 'nationalism and politics', but with 'humanity and socialism'.<sup>28</sup>

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels also originally conversed in this milieu of young Germans who explored socialist ideas in journalistic publications. The story of their intellectual development in the 1840s is well known: Socialism was probably first mentioned to Marx by Moses Hess when they worked at the *Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne in 1842. Yet Marx hesitated to adopt the new creed for over a year and first embraced socialist ideas in his 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law' in early 1844.<sup>29</sup> In line with what was then a mainstream German socialist stance, he suggested that Germany should produce a superior kind of revolution than that experienced by France, not only raising Germany 'to the official level of the modern nations, but to the human heights, which are the near future of these nations'.<sup>30</sup> In the summer of 1844 he met Friedrich Engels, who introduced him to the economic ideas he had encountered during his stay in England. They began collaborating and in early 1845 published their first joint work, *The Holy Family*, an attack on Bruno Bauer and other left Hegelians.<sup>31</sup>

Over the following two years, Marx and Engels increasingly distanced themselves from German socialists like Grün, Hess, and Lünig, whom they came to refer to ironically as the 'true' socialists. In manuscripts from 1845–46, posthumously published as *The German Ideology*, they attacked their humanist conception of socialism for being too philosophical and detached from the reality of class struggle. The writings of the German socialists, Marx and Engels claimed, consisted of nothing but 'the translation of French ideas into the language of the German ideologists'.<sup>32</sup> They falsely tried to comprehend French and English socialist literature not as 'the product of a real movement', but as 'purely theoretical writings'. Based on their misunderstanding of the foreign writings, they set out to 'clarify them by invoking the German ideology

<sup>28</sup> O. Lünig, 'Politik und Sozialismus' in O. Lünig (ed.), *Dieses Buch gehört dem Volke* (Bielefeld: A. Helmich, 1845).

<sup>29</sup> See D. Gregory, 'Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' knowledge of French socialism in 1842–43', *Historical Reflections*, 10/1 (1983).

<sup>30</sup> Marx, 'Contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of law. Introduction', *MECW*, vol. III (1975), p. 182.

<sup>31</sup> Marx and Engels, 'The Holy Family, or critique of critical criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and company' in *MECW*, vol. IV (1975).

<sup>32</sup> Marx and Engels, 'The German ideology', *MECW*, vol. V (1975), p. 456.

and notably that of Hegel and Feuerbach'.<sup>33</sup> This 'hybrid sect' had been 'bound to occur in a country as stagnant as Germany', and it appealed primarily to the 'petty bourgeoisie with its philanthropic illusions' rather than helping advance proletarian revolution.<sup>34</sup>

In the second half of the 1840s, German socialism thus started to become fragmented. Not coincidentally, this was also the time when German socialists first began to organise a political movement. In spring 1846, Marx set up the Communist Correspondence Committee that he and Engels later joined with the League of the Just in Paris. In summer 1847, they held the founding congress of the Communist League in London, which at its second meeting commissioned an official document, the *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels and published in February 1848. In this text they drew the ultimate dividing lines between different varieties of socialism, dismissing the thought of Grün, Hess, and others as 'reactionary socialism' that had been superseded by their advanced vision of communist revolution.<sup>35</sup> That this attack was also intended to help legitimatise their political leadership is clearly demonstrated by the fact that Moses Hess had been their close collaborator until shortly before the publication of the *Manifesto*. Hess was a member of the League and in fact the author of an earlier version of the *Communist Manifesto*. Engels purposely pushed him aside in late 1847, following personal disagreements.<sup>36</sup> The later rise of the *Manifesto* to an authoritative statement of socialist doctrine obscured the important tradition of humanistic socialism in Germany that had emerged in the 1840s and that was in fact still relevant at the outbreak of the Revolution of 1848.

### III The German Socialists' Experience of 1848 and Its Aftermath

Many German socialists did not stay true to their rejection of politics when revolution broke out in 1848 but instead found themselves at the forefront of the new democratic politics. Arnold Ruge, for example, joined the Frankfurt Assembly as a member of the extreme left. Karl Grün became a delegate to the Prussian National Assembly later in 1848. Other socialists continued to focus on radical journalism. Marx and Engels, who like many others returned from exile after hearing news of the revolution, set up the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne. Otto Lüning and Joseph Weydemeyer

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456. <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>35</sup> See section III. 1. c. 'German or "True" socialism' in Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', *MECW*, vol. VI (1976), p. 510.

<sup>36</sup> E. Silberman, *Moses Hess: Geschichte seines Lebens* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 280.



published the radical paper *Neue Deutsche Zeitung*.<sup>37</sup> Moses Hess briefly worked together with the workers' activist Andreas Gottschalk in Cologne, but – largely due to rivalries with Marx – left Germany again in May 1848 and remained in Paris where he worked as a journalist.

The German socialists disagreed on many issues as far as a political strategy for revolutionary Germany was concerned. The wider conflict between revolutionaries who endorsed republicanism and those who favoured constitutional monarchy also divided the socialists.<sup>38</sup> In March 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published their 'Demands of the Communist Party in Germany', a list of claims that described the application of their ideas to the political situation in their home country. They called for Germany to become a centralised republic, yet this met with opposition, for example by Andreas Gottschalk, a doctor who became an influential workers' leader in Cologne in 1848. As Gottschalk explained, 'the name "republic" is highly unpopular and the proletariat is at least in this place not yet strong enough to act independently'.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, Gottschalk's main ambition in 1848 was to improve the actual conditions of the workers. In April, he set up a workers' association in Cologne and petitioned the new prime minister, Camphausen, to introduce practical measures to improve workers' welfare.<sup>40</sup> Marx and Engels considered democracy and centralisation more important. Before it radicalised later in the revolutionary year, their *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in fact rarely discussed workers' issues at all and instead promoted a 'bourgeois revolution', that is the introduction of constitutional and democratic structures.

German socialists also often struggled to reconcile their humanist vision with the reality of parliamentary politics, as the experience of Karl Grün illustrates. In summer 1848, Grün was elected to the First Democratic Congress, which he initially put great hopes into, yet was soon disappointed by. He took issue with the Congress' opening declaration that the political model for Germany should be 'a democratic republic in which the community takes responsibility for the freedom and wellbeing of the individual'.<sup>41</sup> A democratic principle could, in Grün's

<sup>37</sup> M. Krause, 'Lüning Otto', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 15 (1987), p. 417, [www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz54968.html](http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz54968.html) [accessed 7 October 2016].

<sup>38</sup> See D. Langewiesche, 'Republic, konstitutionelle Monarchie und "soziale Frage": Grundprobleme der deutschen Revolution von 1848/9', *Historische Zeitschrift* 230 (1980).

<sup>39</sup> K. Stommel, 'Der Armenarzt Dr. Andreas Gottschalk, der erste Kölner Arbeiterführer, 1848', *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein*, 166 (1964), 31.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>41</sup> K. Grün, '[Rechenschaftsbericht] Der Abgeordnete des Trier'schen demokratischen Vereins zur Frankfurter Konferenz an seine Vollmachtgeber' [*Volksblatt*, Trier, No. 29,

view, not coexist with the commitment to provide for citizens' welfare. Such rights would have to be accompanied by duties, for example an obligation to work, which would inevitably turn the state into a coercive institution. Grün retained his humanistic understanding of socialism throughout the revolution. He was eventually arrested and tried for his participation in the May 1849 insurrection. In his defence speech he gave a remarkable account of his understanding of socialism:

You call me a socialist! Yes, gentlemen, this is correct: For many years now, I have sought to study the deepest and last question of European society. I have been concerned to research the source of dismal social misery . . . The word 'socialist' is frequently used to denote a social republic . . . By confusing all terms, I have been classified as a communist and revolutionary . . . It is not my aim, however, to destroy anything that is currently in existence, before I have proved the theoretical and practical possibility for the existence of something new. What I want is the association of productive forces, and the eradication of misery by gradual, reformist means.<sup>42</sup>

As late as 1850 Grün thus conceived of socialism as a peaceful, organic movement towards human improvement, and rejected associations with both revolution and statist socialism such as, for example, the doctrine of Louis Blanc.

When the German revolution was defeated, the majority of German socialists were forced to flee into exile. Many had already been driven abroad during the 1840s, and after 1849 all hopes they might have still had for continuing their radical project in Germany were crushed. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* published its last issue – famously printed in red ink – on 19 May 1849, and three months later, Marx and Engels set out for London. Arnold Ruge also went to Britain and settled in Brighton. Grün spent the following decade in Brussels, while Moses Hess lived between Switzerland, Belgium, and France for the rest of his life.

The struggles of life in exile, together with the disappointment brought by 1848, led many German socialists to abandon their preoccupation with radical politics. Grün, who worked as a teacher, did not publish anything for several years after 1848 and later mostly wrote rather apolitical literature reviews as well as travel guides. Hermann Püttmann, the editor of leading socialist journals like the *Rheinische Jahrbücher*, completely abandoned his interest in socialism after he emigrated to Australia in 1849. And Moses Hess declared in 1852: 'the reaction has put us one-time socialist writers into, at least temporary,

28 June 1848] in K. Grün, *Ausgewählte Schriften in zwei Bänden*, M. Köppe (ed.) 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), p. 541.

<sup>42</sup> M. Köppe, 'Biographische und werkanalytische Einleitung' in Grün, *Schriften*, p. 210.

retirement'.<sup>43</sup> He gave up writing on socialism for over a decade and later became known as a theorist of Zionism, publishing his *Rome and Jerusalem* in 1862. Otto Lünig's later involvement with the German national liberal party also represented a significant departure from his socialist activism.<sup>44</sup>

The break with their previous political lives was even more profound for those German socialists who emigrated to the United States, a destination virtually all of them at least considered in the early 1850s. Ruge, for instance, sought the advice of émigré Hermann Kriege, who responded: 'I can understand that you are fed up with Europe, and I find it very reasonable that you no longer want to dedicate your efforts to pointless martyrdom.'<sup>45</sup> Yet, the reason many hesitated to make the move was precisely what Kriege hinted at: going to America was equated with giving up on a long-standing European intellectual tradition. As Alexander Herzen put it, 'it is time to abandon our artificial conventional life, but not by escaping to America'.<sup>46</sup> Herzen suggested that Russia might be a new source of inspiration for European progressive politics, an idea that found a significant following among German socialists. The left Hegelian Bruno Bauer, for example, became fascinated with both Russian and German nationalism, yet increasingly embraced a chauvinistic and ultimately anti-Semitic brand of it.<sup>47</sup>

By contrast to those who took a radical departure from their old ideas, there were others who desperately clung on to their beliefs, not least because for several years after 1848 there were widespread hopes for the imminent outbreak of a second revolution. Arnold Ruge, for example, did not significantly depart from his previous political ideas. In his post-1848 work he criticised socialists like Louis Blanc and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon for their purely economic vision of socialism and advocated his ideal of a 'social-democratic free state', a humanist vision in which political and economic institutions served the development of the 'true human'.<sup>48</sup> His position found an unexpected defence in an anonymous pamphlet published in 1852, which claimed that Ruge, whose thought had allegedly

<sup>43</sup> 'Moses Hess to Jacob Moleschott, 18 December 1852' in E. Silberman (ed.), *Moses Hess, Briefwechsel* (S-Gravenhage: (Mouton, 1959)), p. 290.

<sup>44</sup> See Krause, 'Lünig, Otto'.

<sup>45</sup> See A. Ruge and P. Nerrlich (eds.), *Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter aus den Jahren 1825–1880* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1886), pp. 109, 124.

<sup>46</sup> Herzen, *From the Other Shore*, p. 78.

<sup>47</sup> B. Bauer, *Rußland und das Germanenthum* (Charlottenburg: Bauer, 1853) and *Deutschland und das Russenthum* (Charlottenburg: Bauer, 1854). See also Moggach, *Bauer*, p. 180.

<sup>48</sup> A. Ruge, *Die Gründung der Demokratie in Deutschland, Oder Der Volksstaat und der social-demokratische Freistaat* (Leipzig: Verlagsbureau, 1849), p. 26.

inspired an entire generation of radicals, would continue to be influential to politics because his idealism provided a healthy counterweight to recent pragmatism.<sup>49</sup> Such commitment to idealism was, however, rare in the post-revolutionary era. From about 1850, Hegel's philosophy was in fact no longer taught at German universities, as his thought was widely blamed for the outbreak of the revolution.<sup>50</sup>

Among Ruge's principal critics were Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx, for instance, described how in 1848, 'Ruge looked on helplessly: he no longer knew which path to take; his Hegelian categories had always operated in a vacuum, now they ran completely amok.'<sup>51</sup> Yet, in fact his and Engels' post-1848 work also often seemed to rely on old, pre-revolutionary ideas. In their analysis of 1848, one cannot escape the sense that they tried to fit events to an existing theory. The summary of Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*, for instance, read:

In a word: the revolution made progress, forged ahead, not by its immediate tragic-comic achievements, but on the contrary by the creation of a powerful, united counter-revolution, by the creation of an opponent in combat with whom alone the party of insurrection ripened into a really revolutionary party. To prove this is the task of the following pages.<sup>52</sup>

Even an adverse development, the rise of the reaction, was interpreted as helpful to larger scheme of things.

The turn to a 'scientific' language that Marx and Engels embraced in their writings after 1848 was part of a broader intellectual shift. The dismissal of idealism in the aftermath of the failed revolution was followed by a rise of materialism philosophy, mirrored in the move from romanticism to realism in literature, and to naturalism in art. There was a new sense that science, instead of philosophy, could explain the human condition. Scientific study thus became a major replacement activity for German socialists after 1848. Moses Hess, for example, corresponded with the Dutch scientist Jacob Moleschott, who published the popular science book *The Circle of Life* in 1852. The radical poet Georg Herwegh, in correspondence from 1850, asked his wife to send him zoology and biology books, as he had recently developed an interest in science.<sup>53</sup> Even

<sup>49</sup> [Anon.], *Die Triarier D. F. Strauss, L. Feuerbach und A. Ruge und ihr Kampf für die moderne Geistesfreiheit. Ein Beitrag zur letztvergangenen deutschen Geistesbewegung. Von einem Epigonen* (Kassel: J. C. J. Raabe, 1852), p. 149.

<sup>50</sup> See K.C. Köhnke, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.) *The Rise of neo-Kantianism: German Academic Philosophy between Idealism and Positivism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>51</sup> Marx, 'The Great Men of the Exile', *MECW*, vol. XI (1979), p. 264.

<sup>52</sup> Marx, 'The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850', in *MECW*, vol. X (1978), p. 47.

<sup>53</sup> G. Herwegh, I. Pepperle (eds.) *Werke und Briefe, vol. 6: Briefe 1849–1875* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2005), p.78.

Arnold Ruge urged his son to study natural sciences, claiming that this was what gave him 'solace in these difficult times'.<sup>54</sup> It is obvious that in the majority of cases, this turn to science was no more than a superficial substitutional outlet for radical ambition. The anonymous author of an 1852 political pamphlet quite accurately captured the nature of this trend: 'The mysteries of religion have now become problems of physics and geology, and one searches for their solution not in dogmatics but in the cosmos.'<sup>55</sup> Indeed, by the end of the decade, materialism was already attacked as crude, and with the rise of neo-Kantianism the 1860s saw at least a partial revival of idealism.<sup>56</sup>

The period after 1848 was for the majority of German socialists thus a time of deep confusion and despair. Their old ideals were defeated, but those who did not completely abandon socialism often ended up aimlessly restating old ideas. Instead of devising a new philosophical and political strategy, they thus found themselves reaching an intellectual dead-end. Many socialists were, moreover, simply unable to make sense of the politics of the 'decade of reaction'. Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état of December 1851, for example, appeared utterly mystifying to many radicals. Analysing the coup in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx observed the confusing phenomenon of the autarchic state reasserting itself despite popular pressure for democracy.<sup>57</sup> One contemporary, by contrast, had both a coherent understanding of what had happened in 1848 and its aftermath and an original idea for where German socialism should head in the post-revolutionary era: Lorenz von Stein.

#### IV Lorenz von Stein on the Meaning of 1848

Like most members of his generation, Lorenz von Stein was deeply affected by the Revolution of 1848. Following his stay in Paris, he had returned to his alma mater, the University of Kiel in the mid-1840s. He worked as a law lecturer and became involved in Schleswig-Holstein's burgeoning nationalist movement. Following the left Hegelians' attack on his book, Stein in 1844 explicitly distanced himself from their vision of humanist German socialism, dismissing it as illogical and incompatible

<sup>54</sup> P. Nerrlich (ed.) *Arnold Ruges Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter aus den Jahren 1825–1880* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1886), p. 136.

<sup>55</sup> [Anon.], *Die Triarier*, p. 144.

<sup>56</sup> J. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848–1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 56–67.

<sup>57</sup> Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', *MECW*, vol. XI (1979).

with the Hegelian idea of dialectic.<sup>58</sup> Yet, to Stein's delight, his argument about socialism not only reverberated with Germany's radicals, but also with leading scholars of *Staatswissenschaft* like Robert von Mohl and Johannes Fallati, who both wrote positive reviews of Stein's books.<sup>59</sup> These scholars were also among the founding members of the *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, a journal established in 1844 with the goal to extend the discourse of 'state science' to social topics – just as Stein had envisaged.<sup>60</sup> Boosted by this experience, Stein in late 1847 published an updated edition of *Der Communismus und Socialismus*, in which he explicitly endorsed monarchy, rather than a republic, as the form of government most suitable to resolve class conflict.<sup>61</sup>

The outbreak of revolutions across Europe coincided with a renewed crisis in Schleswig-Holstein's long-standing conflict with Denmark. This initially came to be Stein's main preoccupation in 1848. He joined the revolutionary independence movement that was formed in reaction to Danish attempts to annex Schleswig. At the same time, he was a vocal supporter of German unification and – unsuccessfully – stood for election to the Frankfurt Parliament. Crucially, the provisional government of Schleswig-Holstein entrusted Stein to travel to Paris in late June 1848 in order to attempt to win French support for their struggle against Denmark. Politically, Stein was not able to achieve anything, yet the mission proved highly significant for his own intellectual development. Arriving in Paris in the middle of the violent June uprisings, Stein was able to witness this 'class struggle' in person. This allowed him to gain further insights into the meaning of socialism, which – having retired from politics in summer 1848 after Schleswig-Holstein's war experienced major setbacks – he over the coming years explored in new academic work on this subject.

At the beginning of 1850, Stein published a book-length analysis of the impact of 1848 on French socialist thought. His three-volume *History of the Social Movement in France* extended the story of his earlier books on socialism to the present. Its final volume was exclusively concerned with the Revolution of 1848 and its aftermath, combining a detailed analysis of the year's events with a theoretical discussion of the nature of monarchy

<sup>58</sup> See L. von Stein, 'Blicke auf den Socialismus und Communismus in Deutschland und ihre Zukunft', *Deutsche Vierteljahrs Schrift* (1844), II.

<sup>59</sup> See R. von Mohl, 'Über Socialismus und Communismus', in *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 and 12 January 1843; J. Fallati, 'Socialismus und Communismus', in *Jahrbücher der Gegenwart* (July 1843), no. 1–12.

<sup>60</sup> See 'Vorwort', *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, 1 (1844).

<sup>61</sup> L. von Stein, *Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs*, 2nd edn. (Leipzig: Wigand, 1848).

and republicanism in their interaction with social forces.<sup>62</sup> For Stein, the history of 1848 was the history of a contest between two forms of republicanism: the 'republic of the property-owning class' and the 'republic of the proletariat'. As he wrote, the monarchy was resolutely discredited at the beginning of the year. Yet 'popular sovereignty' failed to take its place. The latter was, as Stein believed, a deeply problematic concept: Sovereignty had to be indivisible, while modern society was inherently divided. In a republic, each class tried to appropriate political power for its own interest. France after the fall of the monarchy therefore experienced not the 'rule of the people', but that of a social conflict that was, as Stein had argued since 1842, at the heart of modern society. The events of June 1848, which captivated many contemporary observers, were for Stein consequently not worthy of detailed discussion. They were just the most blatant manifestation of a class conflict that had dominated the revolution from the beginning.

Stein highlighted two important conceptual developments that took place in the course of 1848–49. The first was brought about by Louis Blanc, the theorist of the 'organisation of labour' who was responsible for the national workshops set up in France at the beginning of the revolutionary year. Many German socialists explicitly rejected Blanc's statist ideas as being too narrowly focused on economic issues. By contrast, Stein, who had met Blanc in Paris in the early 1840s, considered him central to the developments of 1848. Although the national workshops failed, according to Stein, they were significant because they allowed workers to have a first-hand experience of democracy. On the one hand, this gave them both the confidence to handle modern politics and the ambition to seek direct political power. On the other hand, the experience led the workers to realise that, if successful in winning political power, they would not waste their time on constitutional debates, but instead concentrate on practical issues that were truly important to them, such as the provision of sufficient work and good labour conditions – in short, as Stein put it, 'the administration of resources'. Stein thus suggested that a vital conceptual shift took place in 1848: the focus of radical politics shifted from the sphere of constitutionalism to that of the administration.

The second conceptual shift that Stein described was inadvertently caused by Louis Bonaparte. Elected president of the Second French

<sup>62</sup> L. von Stein, *Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung in Frankreich von 1789 bis auf unsere Tage*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Wigand, 1850). vol. 1: *Der Begriff der Gesellschaft und die sociale Geschichte der französischen Revolution bis zum Jahre 1830*; vol. 2: *Die industrielle Gesellschaft. Der Socialismus und Communismus Frankreichs von 1830 bis 1848*; vol. 3: *Das Königthum, die Republik und die Souveränität der französischen Gesellschaft seit der Februarrevolution 1848*.



Republic in December 1848, Bonaparte represented the monarchical reaction which, to secure its power further, formed an alliance with the property-owning classes. This adverse development, however, set in motion an important process.<sup>63</sup> The reactionary alliance forced the movement of 'pure democracy' to join forces with the only partner not consumed by it: the proletariat. That way, a proper alliance between socialism and democracy was merged at the beginning of 1849. It was much stronger and more meaningful than all previous social democratic movements, which, according to Stein, were just abstract political constructs and not grounded in historical reality. The new alliance, by contrast, was 'not a theory, not a creed, but a fact of history'.<sup>64</sup> This had crucial consequences for radical politics. Stein wrote: 'It is certain that from now on there will neither be pure democracy, not pure socialism; and thereby the focus of political life and activity has shifted. It moved from the constitutional question to the administrative question.'<sup>65</sup> Not just socialism, but progressive politics as such had thus moved away from abstract concepts towards a more practical approach.

These developments in France had critical implications for Germany. With its tradition of *Staatswissenschaft*, it had long been the country of 'practical politics'. Already in 1842 Stein predicted that thanks to this heritage it would eventually come to play a leading role in progressive European politics. The developments of 1848–49 in France prepared the ground for this. Stein concluded his discussion of the French Revolution of 1848 by claiming that the French were in danger of remaining on the level of social theory, while Germany could turn its efforts to what was really needed in the post-revolutionary era – a practice-oriented 'science of society'. He wrote: 'There is truly no second way, not only to begin a German era in this field, but to generally reach a solution for this [social] question.'<sup>66</sup>

What exactly Stein meant by this became clearer over the coming years. Stein dedicated the years after 1850 to an analysis of German politics, by which he was deeply disappointed following Prussia's betrayal of Schleswig-Holstein that eventually lost the war against Denmark. His 1852 essay 'Socialism in Germany' brought together many of these insights into the meaning of 1848.<sup>67</sup> The major reason why 1848 failed in Germany, Stein claimed, had been a lack of national unity.

<sup>63</sup> Stein, *Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung*, vol. III, p. 420. <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 422. <sup>66</sup> Stein, *Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung*, Vol. I, cxxxiii.

<sup>67</sup> Anon. [Lorenz von Stein], 'Der Socialismus in Deutschland', *Die Gegenwart: Eine encyclopädische Darstellung der neusten Zeitgeschichte für alle Stände*, 7 (1852); repr. in E. Pankoke (ed.), Lorenz von Stein, *Schriften zum Sozialismus, 1848, 1852, 1854* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974).

The revolutionaries' attempt to impose a French-style political model that presumed unity in deeply fragmented Germany was doomed to fail.<sup>68</sup> Germany's relationship with socialism was part and parcel of this problem. Up to 1848, German socialism was just a copy of the French tradition. But after the failure of the revolution, many Germans became disillusioned with French socialist ideas and abandoned them. This departure from French socialism was to Germany's great advantage as it allowed it to finally embrace its own variety of socialist thought, the 'science of society'. The ultimate outcome of 1848 was, therefore, as Stein concluded by 1852, a highly positive one: 'What began as [the proliferation of] French socialism in Germany, has gradually acquired a German shape.'<sup>69</sup>

Creating such a 'science of society' became Stein's principal project after 1848. Already his *History of the Social Movement* from 1850 contained a first attempt to formulate general social laws. By 1852, several authors had followed Stein in this effort. In his essay on socialism in Germany, Stein referred to a number of works that took up social subjects: Ernst Violand's *Soziale Geschichte der Revolution in Östreich* (1850), Adolf Widmann's *Die Gesetze der sozialen Bewegung* (1851), and *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (1851) by Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl.<sup>70</sup> On a personal level the Revolution of 1848 had disastrous consequences for Stein: because of his involvement in Schleswig-Holstein's independence movement he lost his professorship when the Danes took power in 1852. Yet, on an intellectual level, Stein was more optimistic than virtually all other participants of the German Revolution of 1848. The course of the revolution in France and in Germany had confirmed many of his predictions regarding the nature of class conflict and the national basis of socialism. In the early 1850s, he was looking forward to finally creating the German 'science of society'.

## V Conclusion: Stein's Analysis in Perspective

Given the prescience with which Stein analysed the Revolution of 1848, one would have expected him to become a leading political voice in the post-revolutionary period. But the decades after 1848 were in fact largely marked by failure for Stein. In the 1850s, he followed up his plans to create a 'science of society' with the two-volume *System of State Science* (1852–56). It was a highly ambitious work that – in a departure from his

<sup>68</sup> For Stein's analysis of post-revolutionary Prussian politics see especially his 'Zur preußischen Verfassungsfrage', *Deutsche Vierteljahrs Schrift* (1852), I.

<sup>69</sup> Stein, *Schriften zum Sozialismus*, p. 62. <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

earlier historical writing – attempted to formulate the entirety of the laws governing social and political life, and was not well received. Moreover, Stein was frustrated because he could not remain in Germany following his dismissal from Kiel. Prussia, where he became persona non grata because of his loyalty to Schleswig-Holstein, manipulated his attempts to win positions elsewhere in Germany. Following several years of financial hardship and uncertainty, Stein in 1855 found a post in Vienna, where he went on to have a successful academic career, and was even knighted by the Austrian emperor, but never attained the public and political significance he longed for.

Despite his relative obscurity in the decades after 1848, the extent to which Stein's predictions regarding the developments of German socialism in the post-revolutionary period came true is striking. He was, for example, almost alone in his ability to penetrate the confusing politics of the 1850s – an era that can be fruitfully understood as the *Nachmärz*, as it saw much continuity with the pre-revolutionary period (*Vormärz*). Recent scholarship has brought to light that the alleged 'decade of reaction' was much more progressive than previously assumed.<sup>71</sup> Seemingly conservative governments like Louis Bonaparte's France or Prussia under Otto von Manteuffel in fact often responded to popular demand and passed strikingly progressive legislation. Workers' rights were extended and an increased level of public expenditure provided more opportunities for social mobility. These measures were never referred to as 'socialism', but they in fact resembled the vision Stein had outlined in the aftermath of 1848: that of the state implementing socialist principles via its administrative channels. In another echo of Stein, this was often accompanied by social research in the service of policy. The 1850s saw an unprecedented initiative on behalf of European governments to collect statistical information, which was used to make administration more accountable and efficient.<sup>72</sup>

In another way too, Stein's predictions on post-1848 German socialism proved right. Since the early 1840s he had stressed that Germany could not produce an influential socialist movement before achieving national unity. Indeed, the German social-democratic movement that emerged in the early 1860s soon found itself undermined by disagreements over national issues. Ferdinand Lassalle was expressly pro-Prussian and favoured a *kleindeutsch* German state from which Austria was excluded. This explains why his ADAV (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*) was by

<sup>71</sup> See C. Clark, 'After 1848: The European revolution in government', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (2012).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

the mid-1860s rivalled by another social-democratic party, the pro-Austrian SDAP (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands*) under the leadership of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. Incidentally, the issue of nationality also undermined Stein's own standing within German socialism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Once a *kleindeutsch* German Empire was formed in 1871, Stein as an 'Austrian' became an outsider. Bismarck's former social advisor Hermann Wagener speculated in the late 1870s that Stein's 'peculiar reservation' as far as recent German debates on the social question were concerned was at least partly due to 'his current official position in Austria'.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, a third way in which Stein's predictions proved accurate is that German socialism eventually took a distinctly statist form and was also greatly influenced by academia. In October 1872, a group of German professors including Gustav Schmoller, Heinrich von Treitschke, and Rudolf Gneist, who were united by their interest in social issues and their opposition to the social-democratic movement, founded the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* – an institution that was in many ways a realisation of Stein's long-standing ambitions, yet from which he was completely excluded. This movement came to be known as *Kathedersozialismus* and had as its goal to promote social reform and to fight both economic liberalism and revolutionary Marxism. The *Verein* became an important lobbying organisation for social legislation. Experts were consulted on issues relating to social organisation and welfare, and, based on their reports, the *Verein* sent petitions to the German *Reichstag*.<sup>74</sup> It is difficult to establish the exact role the members of the *Verein* played in bringing about the social legislation of the 1880s, which were to a large extent Bismarck's initiative, yet they were undoubtedly influential.

In a number of ways, Stein's vision was thus highly influential to the development of German socialism in the nineteenth century. Yet, given his rising unpopularity from the 1850s, explicit acknowledgements of his contribution are extremely rare. Stein's intellectual legacy clearly became an inconvenient truth within the German socialist tradition in this period. Ultimately, however, it is impossible to deny that he greatly influenced the more prominent leaders of German socialism. For example, it is virtually inevitable that Ferdinand Lassalle knew Stein's work.

<sup>73</sup> Anon. [H. Wagener], *Die Lösung der sozialen Frage vom Standpunkte der Wirklichkeit und Praxis – Von einem praktischen Staatsmanne* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1878), p. 45.

<sup>74</sup> D. F. Lindenfeld, *The Practical Imagination: The German Sciences of State in the Nineteenth Century* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 227–28.

As Lassalle's biographer Hermann Oncken perceptively commented on this topic:

[In Stein's work] Lassalle's theory and practice seem to be prefigured more than anywhere else. A whole chain of connections leads from Stein's to Lassalle's train of thought. One cannot doubt that the latter knew his predecessor; it does not mean anything that Stein is never mentioned in his writings and speeches, given his method of citation.<sup>75</sup>

Like virtually all radicals of his generation, Lassalle had been deeply influenced by Hegel's thought. Another major similarity he shared with Stein was their continued reliance on Hegelian ideas in the 1850s and 1860s. Lassalle was imprisoned early in 1848, and after his release in the early 1850s remained in the Rhineland where he became involved in workers' clubs while continuing to study Hegelian philosophy.

Yet, by the time Lassalle published his major theoretical writings in the early 1860s, Stein had long been replaced as the household name of German state socialism. Contemporaries were instead increasingly drawing on Johann Karl Rodbertus, a lawyer and owner of a large estate in Pomerania, who had also pursued an interest in socialism since the late 1830s. He rose to prominence following his political engagement in the 1848 Revolution when he was a leading representative of the *Linkes Zentrum* in the Prussian national assembly.<sup>76</sup> Rodbertus was a supporter of the monarchy, and like Stein envisaged a 'social monarchy' as the only solution to the social problems endemic to modern industrial society. His rise to fame in the 1860s remains surprising, as he was certainly a less systematic and thorough theorist than Stein. Lassalle, however, for example praised Rodbertus's economic theories in his work *Herr Bastiat-Schulze oder Capital und Arbeit* (1863–64).

How keen late-nineteenth-century German socialists were to erase Stein's name from their intellectual background was demonstrated in a particularly flagrant way during the Revisionism debate in the late 1890s. Stein, who had died in 1890, was used by the statist opponents of Marx to make the case for the inclusion of statist institutions in the socialist project.<sup>77</sup> To the Marxists, however, Stein and his ideas were deeply reactionary and a threat to their revolutionary socialist agenda. In their writings from the time, they therefore vehemently denied any

<sup>75</sup> H. Oncken, *Lassalle: Zwischen Marx und Bismarck*, Felix Hirsch (ed.), 5th edn. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966), p. 206.

<sup>76</sup> On Rodbertus see M. Wirth, 'Rodbertus, Johann Karl', ADB (1889), 740–63. [www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118745638.html](http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118745638.html).

<sup>77</sup> P. von Struve, 'Stein, Marx und der wahre Socialismus' in *Die neue Zeit*, 15/2 (1897), 269–73.

direct impact or resemblance between Stein and Marx.<sup>78</sup> As the Marxist vision triumphed over following decades, Stein was consciously written out of the story. What was lost with him were his insights into the meaning of 1848 and the impact of the revolution and its aftermath on German socialism.

<sup>78</sup> F. Mehring, 'Stein, Hess, Marx', in *Die Neue Zeit*, 15/2 (1896–7), 379–82. For a summary of the debate see B. Földes, 'Bemerkungen zu dem Problem Lorenz von Stein – Karl Marx', *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 102 (1914), 289–99.

## 12 Post-Revolutionary Politics

### The Case of the Prussian Ministry of State

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*Anna Ross*

The 1848 Revolutions caused profound upheavals not just in the sphere of political thought but also in the offices of German state ministries, bureaucracies, and police forces.<sup>1</sup> Although few officials penned thick tomes reflecting on their experiences, most scribbled a constant flow of messages as events unfolded. The amount of paper expended on the revolution grew apace as ministries commissioned investigations into topics ranging from the state of the press and public opinion to the success of new voting regulations. In addition to this, local bureaucrats in the provinces sent an uneven flow of reports to their respective capitals, where political elites were also in receipt of police messages and missives. Equally, a flurry of letters from envoys and ambassadors only magnified the amount of correspondence generated in the German states.

This edifice of paper reveals a great deal about the ways in which political elites joined up and conceptualised a landscape of revolution, and in particular, it illuminates the ways in which they sought to learn lessons based on their experiences of upheaval. For a growing number of ministers and officials in late 1848 and early 1849, the old-conservative fear of constitutions quickly yielded to an appreciation for the ways in which such documents could restore confidence in the state. In judicial affairs, justice ministers reassessed demands for modern criminal codes and came to see the advantages of public trials by jury. For trade ministers, they recognised a more urgent need to understand the growing frustrations of German business communities and to consider their demands for greater banking privileges. Certainly many acknowledged that the affairs of artisans needed to be regulated by the state rather than old guild structures. The same shift in concerns was true for urban areas. Here state officials looked to energise municipal institutions to better address the growing social problems in cities and the possible

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank James Brophy, Christopher Clark, Bärbel Holtz, Douglas Moggach, Frank Müller, and Gareth Stedman Jones for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. I am also grateful for the support of the Sir John Plumb Trust and the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust in generously funding this research.



revolutionary futures that an expanding working class could generate. And in the public sphere, some interior ministers began to think less about silencing newspapers and rather sought to direct their influence into supporting government initiatives. As James Sheehan observed, the result was that 'almost everywhere in German Europe the administrative apparatus became larger, more effective, and more ambitious' as the state began to accept new tasks after 1848.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Christopher Clark has claimed that this period saw nothing less than a revolution in government.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter examines those ministers in Prussia who frequently eschewed doctrinaire reactions to revolution in favour of learning lessons from the events of 1848–49. In particular, it examines the little-researched Brandenburg-Manteuffel (1848–50) and later Manteuffel (1850–8) Ministries of State, in which a number of non-doctrinaire conservatives successfully mitigated uncompromising policies of reaction. The Ministry of State (*Staatsministerium*), or cabinet, played a central role in Prussia's domestic affairs after 1848.<sup>4</sup> It was responsible for drafting the Prussian constitution and for overseeing revisions to this document. In the arena of the Prussian parliament (*Landtag*), the ministry took the lead in representing monarchical interests and outside of it; it assumed new strategies for promoting political stability in the press and public sphere. Alongside ministers of the Austrian Empire, moreover, the Prussian ministry assumed a dominant position in the political affairs of German-speaking Europe, including executing Prussia's response to the movement for national unification. The Brandenburg-Manteuffel and Manteuffel Ministries of State illuminate a great deal about the ways in which Prussian conservatives sought to learn lessons from the revolution, but they were in no way unique. In the Austrian Empire, figures such as Prince Schwarzenberg regained stability by adopting political initiatives and institutions first developed by revolutionaries.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, there are many examples of state

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 725.

<sup>3</sup> C. Clark, 'After 1848: The European revolution in government', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (2012), 171–97.

<sup>4</sup> On the institution of the Ministry of State see B. Holtz, 'Das preussische Staatsministerium auf seinem Weg vom königlichen Ratskollegium zum Parlamentarischen Regierungsorgan', *Forschung zur Brandenburgischen und Preussischen Geschichte* 16 (2006), 67–102; H. Brunck, *Bismarck und das Preußische Staatsministerium, 1862–1890* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004); O. Hintze, 'Das preußische Staatsministerium im 19. Jahrhundert' in G. Oestrich (ed.), *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Staats-, Rechts- und Sozialgeschichte Preussens*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962–1968), vol. III, *Regierung und Verwaltung* (1967), pp. 530–619.

<sup>5</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, pp. 710–11; R. J. W. Evans, 'From Confederation to compromise: The Austrian experiment, 1849–1867', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 87 (1994), 135–67.

ministers seeking to draw upon a reform-minded form of conservative politics in response to revolutionary upheaval across the Third Germany. In the Kingdom of Saxony, this became evident in the work of bureaucrats such as Albert Christian Weinlig in the interior ministry.<sup>6</sup> In Hanover and Württemberg too, as Abigail Green has shown, bureaucrats considered a range of new initiatives across state-building practices from education to communications.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in some small states such as Baden, we can identify a number of progressive government practices that developed in the post-revolutionary period.

The case of the Prussian Ministry of State reveals, therefore, only one part of a much wider shift in conservative politics in the 1850s but it is an important one. The constitutional compromises, new pieces of legislation, and codes created in Prussia in the post-revolutionary period fundamentally influenced the relationship between state and society in the 'New Era' and beyond in the unified German Empire. Of course, developments in state-building outside Prussia were important too and across many spaces they played an important role in political life, but this chapter makes the case that there was a defining shift in conservative politics in Prussia in the 1850s that is in need of explanation.

## I Negotiating an End to the Revolutions

On 8 November 1848, Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861) appointed the Brandenburg-Manteuffel Ministry of State and with it, signalled the beginning of the end of the revolution in Prussia.<sup>8</sup> Two days later, the hawkish General Wrangel helped the ministry to dissolve the National Assembly, before introducing martial law in Berlin. Troops then marched out across the provinces to suppress insurgencies, forcing many 1848'ers to flee abroad to escape this bloody clash and the wave of reprisals that followed. For those who remained at home, they watched as the ministry strengthened police forces, curtailed civil liberties, and revised the constitutional gains made during the revolution. In early 1851, the

<sup>6</sup> R. J. Bazillion, *Modernizing Germany: Karl Biedermann's Career in the Kingdom of Saxony, 1835–1901* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 236–89.

<sup>7</sup> A. Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm IV in the *Preußischer Staats-Anzeiger*, 8 November 1848 in Heinrich von Poschinger (ed.), *Unter Friedrich Wilhelm IV: Denkwürdigkeiten des Ministers Otto Freiherrn von Manteuffel*, 3 vols. (Berlin: E.S. Mittler und Sohn, 1901), vol. I, p. 22. For Friedrich Wilhelm IV's intention to decisively crush the revolution through the new Ministry of State see his statements in 'Mein Zweck', 8 November 1848, in Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA PK), Brandenburg-Preussisches Hausarchiv (BPH), Rep. 50 E 2, Nr. 5, pp. 105–6.

ministry put an end to the last outpost of revolutionary activism – the movement for national unification – as they abandoned all attempts to unite Germany under Prussian leadership. The state finally gained the upper hand over the revolution, ushering in what many historians have called the ‘decade of reaction’.

By all accounts the Brandenburg-Manteuffel Ministry of State appeared to be the abettors of a much larger, unified, and deeply ultraconservative front in the Counter-revolution of 1848–51 and Reaction of 1851–54. The most enthusiastic proponent of an uncompromising counter-revolution was a circle of ultraconservatives at court, known as Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s *Camarilla*. Throughout the autumn of 1848, the *Camarilla* championed the formation of a military-minded ministry to regain the initiative in the National Assembly. On 29 September, Ludwig von Gerlach (1795–1877) argued for the appointment of a series of ultraconservatives to this ministry, including Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg (1792–1850), Otto von Bismarck (1815–98), Hans Hugo von Kleist-Retzow (1814–92), and Marcus Niebuhr (1817–60), under the command of the prince of Prussia.<sup>9</sup> Leopold von Gerlach (1790–1861) agreed. He, like his brother, was willing to entertain the notion of such a ministry.<sup>10</sup> But Friedrich Wilhelm IV was unsure. He conceded that a more conservative ministry was needed, but hesitated pursuing such an extreme course which could mean provoking further revolutionary outbursts. As he put it, men like Otto von Bismarck could only be appointed, ‘when the bayonet governs unrestricted’.<sup>11</sup> The result was a compromise: Friedrich Wilhelm IV accepted Brandenburg as the candidate to take over the position of minister-president (*Minister-Präsident*) but the *Camarilla*’s more extreme suggestions for new ministers were shelved.<sup>12</sup>

The ensuing ministry stood, therefore, in close connection to the sympathies of the *Camarilla* but less so than ultraconservatives would have liked. Despite the *Camarilla*’s enthusiasm for Brandenburg, he showed himself to be less aligned with their politics than they had expected. Brandenburg insisted on being able to appoint and direct the new ministry without interference and to much surprise, one of his first

<sup>9</sup> ‘Ludwig von Gerlach to Leopold von Gerlach’, 29 September 1848, in D. E. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy, 1840–1861* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> See Ludwig von Gerlach’s diary entry on 9 September 1848 in H. Diwald (ed.), *Von der Revolution zum Norddeutschen Bund. Politik u. Ideengut der preussischen Hochkonservativen, 1848–1866. Aus dem Nachlaß von Ernst Ludwig von Gerlach*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), vol. I, *Tagebuch, 1848–1866*, pp. 111–2.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 96.

<sup>12</sup> Barclay, *Frederick William IV*, pp. 155–56.

acts in office was to attempt to persuade the ministers of the outgoing Pfuel Ministry of State to remain in position and see if some form of equipoise could be reached between Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the National Assembly. Needless to say, there was no immediate appointment of *Camarilla* members to the ministry. Moreover, Brandenburg's emerging pragmatism became evident in discussions of the constitutional crisis. Unlike the ultraconservatives, he believed that Prussia had no option but to constitutionalise. As he wrote: 'only the state revolutionised from above [can be] saved from anarchy'. Brandenburg did not think this the best course of action but the only one available to Prussia. He continued, that only on these foundational actions can '[we] – with God's help – continue to build with moderation, strength, and consequence'.<sup>13</sup> It soon became clear that Brandenburg was not the minister-president the *Camarilla* expected him to be and he was not going to oversee the kind of counter-revolution they had hoped for. 'Brandenburg avoided speaking with me', wrote Leopold to Ludwig von Gerlach as early as 19 November 1848. 'I find it odd', he continued, but could not blame Brandenburg for wanting to show 'his colleagues, officials, and the country that he is no creature or tool of the Potsdam *Camarilla*'.<sup>14</sup>

Similar to Brandenburg, the new interior minister (*Innenminister*) and minister for agriculture (*Landwirtschaftsminister*), Otto Theodor Freiherr von Manteuffel (1805–82), showed signs that he too was unwilling to act on behalf of the *Camarilla*. Manteuffel was a career bureaucrat who in the years before 1848 worked as director of the interior ministry. He was known for his dedication and exceptional administrative abilities, as well as his desire to break into elite political circles in Berlin.<sup>15</sup> As a result it was not long until he captured the attention of Leopold von Gerlach, who warmed to the idea of him joining the ministry.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, Brandenburg was an enthusiastic supporter of Manteuffel. As he told Bismarck: 'I have taken the matter [the Premiership] in hand, but have scarcely looked into the newspapers; I am unacquainted with political matters, and can do no more than to carry my head to market. I want a mahout, a man in whom I trust and who tells me what

<sup>13</sup> G. Grünthal, 'Zwischen König, Kabinett und Kamarilla: Der Verfassungskontroversen in Preußen vom 5.12.1848', *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 32 (1983), 119–74, at 126–27.

<sup>14</sup> Diwald (ed.), *Von der Revolution zum Norddeutschen Bund*, II, p. 599.

<sup>15</sup> See Heseckel quoted in Poschinger (ed.), *Unter Friedrich Wilhelm IV*, I, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> See Ludwig von Gerlach's diary entry, 17 October 1848, in Diwald (ed.), *Von der Revolution zum Norddeutschen Bund*, I, p. 127.

I can do. I go into the matter like a child into the dark, and except Otto Manteuffel, know nobody who possesses previous training as well as my personal confidence.'<sup>17</sup>

Manteuffel was impressive but like the new minister-president, his ideological distance from the *Camarilla* became increasingly apparent. His approach to constitutionalisation and national unification were less progressive than Brandenburg's, but questions of modernisation were central to his politics in the 1850s, and on these issues he stood apart from the old conservatives. For Manteuffel, the revolution had fundamentally altered the political landscape and rather than pursuing a doctrinaire course of reaction, he saw the need for the state to take a stronger role in creating economic growth, streamlining justice, and finding more innovative responses to a growing public sphere. In particular, he identified the press as one of the most important 'new cultural powers' to enter into society, which had 'to be incorporated' into political life.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Manteuffel's disregard for ultraconservative agendas would only increase throughout the decade. *Die Grenzboten* noted on several occasions how little Manteuffel could tolerate the 'Doctrinärs', and in the newly constituted parliament he attempted to distance the ministry from the ideological debates that raged between the ultraconservatives and their critics.<sup>19</sup> He made this clear in the Second Chamber in 1852, when he argued that the task of the ministry was not 'to quarrel, fight, and tussle'.<sup>20</sup> Even with Friedrich Wilhelm IV he argued that the real problem with post-revolutionary conservative politics was not that they sought to put a permanent end to revolutionary upheaval but that the perceived influence of hard-line conservative ideas on state-building created a major source of opposition in Prussia.<sup>21</sup>

Alongside Brandenburg and Manteuffel, the other ministers appointed to the Brandenburg-Manteuffel Ministry of State were, in their various ways, less than enthusiastic about a counter-revolution inflected with ultraconservative ideals. The new *Kultusminister*, Adalbert von

<sup>17</sup> The 'matter' raised could also refer to the selection of ministers. It is unclear but inconsequential to Bismarck's larger point about Brandenburg's opinion of Manteuffel. See J. Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> See 'Manteuffel to von Rochow', 3 July 1851, in K. Wappler, *Regierung und Presse in Preussen. Geschichte der amtlichen Preussischen Pressestellen, 1848–62* (Leipzig: Universitätsverlag, 1935), p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> 'Otto Freiherr von Manteuffel', *Die Grenzboten: Zeitschrift für Politik und Literatur* 9 (1850), 453–59, at 455.

<sup>20</sup> 'Manteuffel in the Second Chamber', 30 March 1852, in Poschinger (ed.), *Unter Friedrich Wilhelm IV*, II, pp. 159–60.

<sup>21</sup> 'Manteuffel to Friedrich Wilhelm IV', February 1852, in GStA PK, BPH, Rep. 50 J, Nr. 797, 93–102, at 99.

Ladenberg, was a case in point. In constitutional questions, he was fiercely aligned with Brandenburg, arguing that Friedrich Wilhelm IV had no option but to constitutionalise Prussia, and he was sympathetic towards the movement for national unification. Indeed, he would later break with the ministry in December 1850 when it finally abandoned plans for a Prussian-led unification.<sup>22</sup> In his work in the ministry of religious and educational affairs (*Kultusministerium*), Ladenberg supported a wide-reaching programme of educational reform in Prussia, and he advocated essential reforms to musical training.<sup>23</sup> Other notable appointments to embrace reforming ideas were the new trade minister (*Handelsminister*) August von der Heydt, who was appointed on 4 December 1848, and the justice minister (*Justizminister*) Ludwig Simons, who was appointed on 10 April 1849. Heydt espoused progressive sympathies in the years before 1848, supporting the constitutional movement in Westphalia and civic equality for Jews. Moreover, deriving from his experience as a merchant banker in the Rhineland, he believed the state needed to assume a more ambitious role in economic development.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, the Brandenburg-Manteuffel Ministry of State was far from united with the old conservatives. Brandenburg was an established member of the political elite at court but once in office, he was determined to assert his distance to the *Camarilla*. Unlike Brandenburg, Manteuffel was neither a part of the *Camarilla* nor did he possess the long-standing support of the Gerlach brothers, but he soon displayed a closer affinity to Brandenburg than he did to any ultraconservative. Likewise, the same distance could be seen with other ministers appointed to the Brandenburg-Manteuffel Ministry of State. Ladenberg owed his political promotions in late 1839 to the reforming *Kultusminister* Karl Freiherr von Stein zum Altenstein, rather than to the patronage of the ultraconservatives of the *Kultusministerium* in the 1840s.<sup>25</sup> And the trade minister August von der Heydt and the justice minister Simons derived their political experience and promotions in arenas detached from the Gerlachs and their circle of protégés centred mainly on the Magdeburg law courts.

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent exposition of Ladenberg's ideas on government see *Überlegungen zur Reorganisation der obersten Staatsbehörden*, February 1854, in GStA PK, BPH, Rep. 192 NI Adalbert v. Ladenberg, Nr. 33.

<sup>23</sup> 'Ladenberg to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, 18 July 1850, in GStA PK, BPH, Rep. 192 NI Adalbert von Ladenberg, Nr. 13; *Überlegungen zur Reorganisation der obersten Staatsbehörden*, *Ibid.*, Nr. 33.

<sup>24</sup> J. M. Brophy, *Capitalism, Politics, and Railroads in Prussia, 1830–1870* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998), pp. 54–56.

<sup>25</sup> 'Friedrich Wilhelm IV to Altenstein', 31 May 1839, in GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Sekt I. 31 Lit. L Nr. 14, p. 13. For correspondence between Ladenberg and Altenstein over the appointment to Director in the *Kultusministerium* see *Ibid.*, pp. 1–3.

But it was not only in personal-political relationships that the ministry stood apart from the old conservatives. Under the lead of Brandenburg, these ministers were willing in late 1848 to negotiate an end to the revolution. Fatigued with the uncertainty of the times, they increasingly looked to restore stability by ensuring that Friedrich Wilhelm IV kept his constitutional promise. This meant that on 5 December 1848, Friedrich Wilhelm IV took the advice of his ministers and promulgated a constitution. And after a period of intensive revision, he finally signed a confirmation of the document on 6 February 1850. Likewise, in national affairs the ministry looked to negotiate an end to the revolution. In 1849, it attempted to avoid entanglement with the national question but throughout 1850, it entertained a 'lesser-German' (*Kleindeutsch*) unification plan in contrast to the 'greater-German' (*Grossdeutsch*) solutions favoured by the old conservatives. In particular, Brandenburg and Ladenberg were vocal supporters of the Prussian-led Union project as a practical and advantageous solution to the national question. Of course, the unification debates of 1850 were put under pressure as Franz Joseph regained control in the Austrian Empire and ultimately the ministry broke with this project in the autumn of 1850, but only because they feared that continued support would drag Prussia into armed conflict with Austria and Russia.<sup>26</sup>

This ministry exuded, therefore, an unmistakable pragmatism throughout 1849 and 1850, and yet it was doing more than just negotiating its way out of revolutionary turmoil. As the rest of the decade would show, Brandenburg and Manteuffel were seeking to reintegrate the state and post-revolutionary society across a number of areas of state-building. This meant devoting careful thought to issues surrounding enfranchisement, as well as the creation of a government party to stand in elections. Questions of trade demanded quick solutions if revolutionary unrest was to be put to an end, and the ministry was anxious to see fairer means by which commercial disputes could be resolved. The situation on the land too required rapid reform. The ministry had to resolve the problem of Prussia's peasantry and think about facilitating an end to indentured servitude through new financial resources. In the sphere of crime and punishment, revolutionary demands for fairer and more modern forms of justice had to be addressed, including the introduction of public criminal trials and limitations to the much-maligned practice of capital

<sup>26</sup> 'Manteuffel to Friedrich Wilhelm IV' in G. Grünthal, 'Im Schatten Bismarcks -Der preußische Ministerpräsident Otto Freiherr von Manteuffel (1805-1882)' in H.-C. Kraus (ed.), *Konservative Politiker in Deutschland: Eine Auswahl biographischer Porträts aus zwei Jahrhunderten* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), pp. 111-133, at p. 122.



punishment. Certainly, in the sphere of cultural and educational affairs, Ladenberg wanted to take the revolutionary break as an opportunity to reform. These challenges were not met with solutions designed to merely placate revolutionary opponents but, as we will see, they were fundamental attempts to restructure the state.

## II Reforming the State

In the years after 1848, 'the power of the *Camarilla*' was, as Leopold von Gerlach wrote, largely 'absorbed by the cabinet'.<sup>27</sup> Never again did this group have such a powerful presence in politics, except as individuals seeking to involve themselves in the political arena or to influence the ministry as it executed Friedrich Wilhelm IV's policies. This became noticeable through the two ultraconservatives who entered the political scene in Berlin after the failure of the Union project. During the height of negotiations in late 1850, Brandenburg fell ill and passed away, leaving an opening in the ministry. Friedrich Wilhelm IV shuffled Manteuffel into Brandenburg's position as minister-president and filled the position of interior minister with the ultraconservative Ferdinand von Westphalen (1799–1876). At the same time on 19 December 1850, Friedrich Wilhelm IV filled the ministerial post vacated by Ladenberg with an ultraconservative counterpart, Karl Otto von Raumer (1805–59).<sup>28</sup>

The new Manteuffel Ministry of State was keen to take the opportunity after December 1850 to further consolidate the monarch's position in domestic affairs, finally securing a clear break with the revolution and the ultraconservatives. Further revisions to the constitution between 1850 and 1854 provided a telling example of this stance. At times during this period, Manteuffel and others thought and hoped that the National Assembly would bring about its own destruction and that of the constitution.<sup>29</sup> But he never exacted such an end and especially after 1853, he avoided any moves to rescind the constitution in its entirety.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Barclay, *Frederick William*, p. 181.

<sup>28</sup> J. Kocka, W. Neugebauer, and R. Zilch (eds.), *Acta Borussica: Die Protokolle des Preussischen Staatsministeriums 1817–1934/38* (Hildesheim: Acta Borussica, 2000), vol. IV, B. Holtz (ed.), 30. März 1848 bis 27 Oktober 1858 (2000), pp. 700–1.

<sup>29</sup> G. Grünthal, 'Konstitutionalismus und konservative Politik: Ein verfassungspolitischer Beitrag zur Ära Manteuffel' in G. A. Ritter (ed.), *Gesellschaft, Parlament und Regierung: Zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus in Deutschland* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1974), pp. 145–64.

<sup>30</sup> H.-C. Kraus, 'Konstitutionalismus wider Willen: Versuche einer Abschaffung oder Totalrevision der preussischen Verfassung während der Reaktionsära (1850–1857)', *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preussischen Geschichte* 5 (1995), 157–240.

Rather, Manteuffel showed himself to be aware of the problems caused by being too rigid in redrawing the limits of political life and although he oversaw an aggressive revision to the new constitution with respect to the organisation of the First Chamber, he neither advocated reducing the parliament to complete incompetence nor sought to unilaterally block the ability of new civil-society interest groups to derive benefits from the state via this institution. Manteuffel's approach to constitutional revisions stood, therefore, in stark contrast to Westphalen, who by 20 December 1852 was looking to gain support for a rescindment of the constitution and the rewriting of an entirely new document that would be more sympathetic to ultraconservative interests.<sup>31</sup>

Manteuffel increasingly opposed the views and suggestions of the new interior minister and *Kultusminister*. As Alexander von Humboldt observed on 28 May 1852, the 'tension in the ministry – on the part of the Minister-President towards Westphalen and Raumer – is great'. He continued to explain that Manteuffel had 'hoped until recently to be able to replace the two with other ministers, who did not belong so decisively to the *Junkerpartei*'.<sup>32</sup> In the years that followed, Manteuffel isolated Westphalen to such a degree that the interior minister offered his resignation to Friedrich Wilhelm IV on 5 March 1852, 21 June 1853, 10 February 1854, 14 February 1854, 26 November 1854, 28 November 1854, and 26 November 1855.<sup>33</sup> In Westphalen's letters of resignation, he cited causes ranging from not be taken seriously by the ministry and being ignored in ministerial discussions, to having his views defamed by Manteuffel in the press.<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm IV would not accept Westphalen's resignation attempts but nonetheless his position in the ministry remained difficult throughout the decade. Moreover, Manteuffel looked to block any wider influences, ultraconservative or otherwise, on Friedrich Wilhelm IV by controlling the access individuals could have to the monarch. On 8 September 1852, he managed to commit Friedrich Wilhelm IV to a cabinet order, which increased the powers of the minister-president, especially by insisting that any minister wishing to consult Friedrich Wilhelm IV was obliged to first inform the minister-president. This allowed Manteuffel to attempt to manage the

<sup>31</sup> Pro Memoria, 20 May 1852, in GStA PK, VI. HA Nl Ferdinand von Westphalen, Nr. 4, 15–26, at 16–17.

<sup>32</sup> 'Alexander von Humboldt to Johann Nicolaus Wirsch', 28 May 1852, in Transkription in *Alexander-von-Humboldt-Forschungsstelle, Berlin-brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Holtz (ed.), *Acta Borussica*, IV, p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance 'Westphalen to Friedrich Wilhelm IV', 21 June 1853, in GStA PK, VI. HA Nl Ferdinand von Westphalen, Nr. 3, pp. 35–40.

flow of information to the monarch and, if need be, sit in on such meetings.<sup>35</sup>

Beyond constitutional questions, the majority view in the Manteuffel Ministry of State was that lessons had to be learned from the revolution so that the state could modernise. In judicial affairs, Manteuffel and the justice minister Simons attempted to shake off cumbersome, ultraconservative approaches to crime and punishment in the 1850s. In the constitution of 5 December 1848, Manteuffel secured the abolishment of private judicial authority in favour of courts under state sanction (Article 40), the introduction of public criminal proceedings (Article 92), and the calling of juries (Article 93). Reforms to criminal procedure in early 1849 also included the introduction of a public prosecution procedure across the state.<sup>36</sup> The implementation of jury courts and verbal and public criminal trials remained enshrined in the constitution of January 1850, although in 1853 the ministry agreed to remove all cases of political importance from trial in public jury courts.<sup>37</sup> On appearances this latter measure looked to be a reactionary turn in policy but the move did not signal a desire to undo the fundamental changes to the judicial landscape on a large scale. Rather, the Manteuffel Ministry of State still supported the new arrangement, including the introduction of juries, and they sought to improve the quality and workings of jury courts within the parameters that Friedrich Wilhelm IV deemed suitable, especially considering the problems the state was having with political trials.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to new trial procedures, Simons successfully oversaw the introduction of a new Criminal Code on 14 April 1851. Since 1804, the Prussian government had been trying, without success, to draft a criminal code to provide a modern basis for criminal law. This entailed delivering greater legal certainty in criminal affairs through a clear categorisation of crimes and their corresponding punishments. Of course, the most desired reform was the repeal of the death penalty in Prussia, which occurred across a range of areas but not for high treason, murder, manslaughter, or intentional homicide in connection with a crime.<sup>39</sup> On the whole the code

<sup>35</sup> Barclay, *Frederick William IV*, pp. 260–61.

<sup>36</sup> P. Collin, 'Wächter der Gesetze' oder 'Organ der Staatsregierung'? Konzipierung, Einrichtung und Anleitung der Staatsanwaltschaft durch das preußische Justizministerium von den Anfängen bis 1860 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> D. Blasius, *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft und Kriminalität. Zur Sozialgeschichte Preußens im Vormärz* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), p. 133.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance the public-relations disaster that was the Cologne Communist Trial in Jürgen Herres, 'Der Kölner Kommunistenprozess von 1852', *Geschichte in Köln. Zeitschrift für Stadt und Regionalgeschichte* 50 (2003), 133–55.

<sup>39</sup> R. J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600–1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 281.

implemented by the Manteuffel Ministry of State was a substantial gain for middle-classes, who welcomed improvements to the judicial system in Prussia. Moreover, the enactment of these new features of the judicial landscape testified to the reforming-spirit in the Manteuffel Ministry of State. Throughout the decade, Manteuffel and Simons had to counter ultraconservative suggestions for a reintroduction of corporal punishment and other such reactionary requests but they resisted, preferring to explore new ideas and methods of governmentality developed by experts in matters of crime and punishment.

As in judicial affairs, the Manteuffel Ministry of State sought to eschew outdated modes of government in economic spheres of interest. One of Manteuffel's first acts in office was to complete the agrarian reforms first started in Prussia during the Napoleonic Wars. In early 1849, he drafted two laws – a Redemption Law and Regulation Law – the first of which looked to turn manorial dues into money rents, and considered rent permanently rescinded after eighteen times the annual value of rent had been paid. The Regulation Law, on the other hand, oversaw the implementation of loan banks able to advance low-interest credit to indentured Prussians to help them purchase the property they worked. The new agricultural reforms had an immediate effect. Between 1850 and 1865, a total of almost 640,000 peasants freed themselves from manorial obligations, with many avoiding a forfeiture of property. As the historian Theodore Hamerow has written: 'For the rural masses between the Elbe and the Vistula liberation from manorialism came not in the early years of the nineteenth century but in its middle period ... conservatives like Manteuffel and Brandenburg were their benefactors more than liberals like Stein and Hardenberg.'<sup>40</sup>

In matters of trade, the trade ministry set ambitious new targets, increasing government spending on railways, mining, and the introduction of the telegraph. And at times, it showed a greater willingness to respond to the demands of business that it had in the pre-1848 period. Certainly as James Brophy has shown, several members of the Manteuffel administration were far more willing to negotiate with liberal commercial interests than was to be expected. This included Manteuffel's recognition of the need for commercial investment banks in Prussia, the likes of which had already been established in France but were morally opposed by the ultraconservatives.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, it was not just the business class that

<sup>40</sup> T. S. Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815–1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 222.

<sup>41</sup> J. M. Brophy, 'The Political Calculus of Capital: Banking and the Business Class in Prussia, 1848–1856', *Central European History* 25 (1992), 149–76. On the banking and business sector in general see the other excellent works by Brophy, 'The *Juste Milieu*:

gained from these initiatives. The ministry increased the responsibility of employers to contribute to pension funds and provided a range of reforms to meet the needs of artisans struggling with increasing industrialisation. As Hamerow put it: 'Not until the promulgation of the social insurance laws in the Eighties did the ruling classes of Germany again display such a concern for the labouring man. In its struggle against bourgeois liberalism the landed aristocracy raised the banner of Tory reform around which nobleman and commoner alike could rally.'<sup>42</sup>

In urban areas, the Brandenburg-Manteuffel and Manteuffel Ministries of State oversaw the implementation of new measures to improve the administration of municipalities. In his capacity as interior minister in the Brandenburg Ministry of State, Manteuffel drafted a new municipal ordinance and police administration law for uniform implementation across all Prussian provinces. The Municipal Ordinance of 11 March 1850 proved to be a highly contentious and long-debated piece of legislation but in its final form, it still sought to provide local government to the many parts of Prussia that lacked it.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the less-contentious Police Administration Law successfully reminded police of the importance of their social responsibilities by making them accountable for overseeing: 'the protection of the person and of property; the care for life and health; the order, security and ease of traffic on public streets, roads and places, bridges, shores and waters; and everything else which from a police point of view must be included among the special interests of the towns and their members'.<sup>44</sup> In Berlin, the police-president (*Polizeipräsident*), Carl von Hinckeldey (1805–56), embraced Manteuffel's legislative initiatives on a dramatic scale. Among other things, he managed the introduction of fresh running water into the Prussian capital, the creation of public baths, the consolidation of a fire brigade, and the implementation of a new building code.<sup>45</sup>

Of particular note to Hinckeldey's work was the development and use of urban statistics through the Berlin statistical office. Hinckeldey

Businessmen and the Prussian State during the New Era and the Constitutional Conflict' in B. Holtz and H. Spenkuch (eds.), *Preußens Weg in die politische Moderne. Verfassungs-Verwaltung-politische Kultur zwischen Reform und Reformblockade* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), pp.193–223; 'Salus publica suprema lex: Prussian Businessmen in the New Era and Constitutional Conflict', *Central European History* 28 (1995), 122–51.

<sup>42</sup> Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction*, p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> For more details on the Municipal Ordinance see Heinrich Heffter, *Die deutsche Selbstverwaltung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1950).

<sup>44</sup> M. Deflem, 'International policing in nineteenth-century Europe: The Police Union of German States, 1851–1866', *International Criminal Justice Review* 6 (1996), 36–57, at 40.

<sup>45</sup> See S. M. Eibich, *Polizei, "Gemeinwohl" und Reaktion: über Wohlfahrtspolizei als Sicherheitspolizei unter Carl Ludwig Friedrich von Hinckeldey, Berliner Polizeipräsident von 1848 bis 1856* (Berlin: BWV, 2004).

established this office in 1853 to better aid his work in the capital. The office collated information on a range of areas pertinent to urban life, including: population growth; mortality rates; the number and distribution of public and private buildings; rent prices; average food prices; and access to light and air in the city's apartments. The end of such information gathering was multifarious, but he generally deployed urban statistics in the process of improving public health in the city. For instance, statistics were used in combination with the new Berlin Building Code to force many property owners to modernise or close the unhealthy cellar apartments they rented. Likewise, urban statistics were used to ensure the orderly movement of traffic and food in the city. Alongside public health, conceived of in physical terms, the police also used urban statistics to improve the moral health of the city. Specifically, Hinckeldey used data on the number and health of prostitutes to better regulate the practice in the capital. This included subjecting such women to mandatory medical examinations to curb the spread of venereal diseases. In short, as Hinckeldey put it, he used urban statistics as the 'foundation of our police effectiveness'.<sup>46</sup>

In the public sphere, the Brandenburg-Manteuffel and Manteuffel Ministries of State also showed evidence of adopting new approaches to the press in their reforming agendas. Manteuffel avidly supported a shift from pre-event censorship to post-event censorship, which many ultra-conservatives actually came to support.<sup>47</sup> This included the creation of a press office in Prussia and the development of modern techniques to engage with public opinion.<sup>48</sup> The Central Office for Press Affairs

<sup>46</sup> 'Hinckeldey to Westphalen', 23 January 1855, in GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77 Minsiterium des Innern, Nr. 80, 147–152, at 148.

<sup>47</sup> J. Frölich, 'Repression und Lenkung versus Pressefreiheit und Meinungsmarkt. Zur preußischen Pressegeschichte in der Reichsgründungszeit 1848–71' in B. Sösemann (ed.), *Kommunikation und Medien in Preußen vom 16. Bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2002), pp. 364–85. On the history of the political press see H.-D. Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland, 1480–1980: Synopse rechtlicher, struktureller und wirtschaftlicher Grundlagen der Tendenzpublizistik im Kommunikationsfeld* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1981).

<sup>48</sup> On the development of the Prussian press office see: G. Nöth-Greis, 'Das Literarische Büro als Instrument der Pressepolitik' in J. Wilke (ed.), *Pressepolitik und Propaganda. Historische Studien vom Vormärz bis zum Kalten Krieg* (Köln: Böhlau, 1997), pp. 1–78; M. Overesch, *Presse zwischen Lenkung und Freiheit: Preußen und seine offiziöse Zeitung von der Revolution bis zur Reichsgründung (1848 bis 1871/72)* (Pullach: Dokumentation, 1974). For a general overview of the official press in the German states see: R. Kohnen, *Pressepolitik des deutschen Bundes: Methoden staatlicher Pressepolitik nach der Revolution von 1848* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995); W. Piereth, 'Propaganda im 19. Jahrhundert. Die Anfänge aktiver staatlicher Pressepolitik in Deutschland (1800–1871)' in U. Daniel and W. Siemann (eds.), *Propaganda, Meinungskampf, Verführung und politische Sinnstiftung 1789–1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), pp. 21–43; Eberhard Naujoks, 'Die offiziöse Presse und die Gesellschaft (1848/1900)' in

(*Zentralstelle für Preßangelegenheiten*) in Prussia monitored both domestic and international papers, collecting reports and statistics on the developing press markets, helping to support a more variegated approach to interventions in the public sphere than had been seen in the decades before 1848. Moreover, it disseminated articles for publication in numerous Prussian newspapers and it financially supported editors willing to co-operate with government agendas.<sup>49</sup>

Press management in Prussia had many limitations in comparison to such endeavours in the Third Germany, but in terms of increased communication with the public sphere, the Prussian Ministry of State was successful in orchestrating an important line of modernisation. For example, Manteuffel, in his positions as interior minister and minister-president, personally saw to it that he passed on information about high politics to newspaper editors. He did this for personal reasons, seeking to use the public sphere as a means of solidifying political advantage. So too did other ministers and political figures after 1848. In addition to this, most of the Prussian ministries disseminated a new range of statistics for use in newspapers. For example, the justice ministry regularly released its statistics for publication in the *Archiv für preußisches Strafrecht*, frequently referred to as *Goldammer's Archiv*. Likewise, Hinckeldey often passed on his statistics to the Central Society for the Welfare of the Working Classes (*Central-Verein für das Wohl der arbeitenden Klassen*).<sup>50</sup> To be sure, the dissemination of statistics could backfire on the ministries, as members of civil society found problems and weaknesses with the government's efforts at modernisation, but their overall presence in the public sphere helped to meet demands for increased knowledge circulation and, in some cases, transparency.

### III Conclusion

In the years after 1848, an important transformation occurred within conservative politics in Prussia. The Minister-Presidents Brandenburg and Manteuffel looked to eschew ultraconservative approaches in negotiating an end to revolutionary upheaval and reforming the Prussian state. Both came to advocate the necessity of constitutionalising Prussia and both considered practical solutions for unification, although neither

E. Blühm (ed.), *Presse und Geschichte. Beiträge zur historischen Kommunikationsforschung* (München: Dokumentation, 1977), pp. 157–70.

<sup>49</sup> Barclay, *Frederick William IV*, p. 261.

<sup>50</sup> See for instance: 'Ueber die Kellerwohnungen in Berlin, die nachtheiligen Einflüsse derselben auf die Gesundheit der Bewohner und Vorschläge zu deren Abhülfe', *Mittheilungen des Centralvereins für das Wohl der Arbeitenden Klassen*, 2 (1856), 218–48.



wanted to risk war with Austria in doing so. Moreover, Manteuffel and others in the Manteuffel Ministry of State sought to learn from the revolution by implementing a range of reforms across important areas of state-building. These included the modernisation of trial procedure and the implementation of a new criminal code, agrarian reforms, increased government spending on railways and the telegraph, a growing willingness to negotiate with liberal commercial interests, state oversight of artisan affairs, an increased administration of municipal areas and a greater willingness on the part of police forces to assume urban responsibilities, shifts from pre-event to post-event censorship, and increased communication with newspapers. Of course, many of the reforms implemented by the Manteuffel Ministry of State derived from plans advocated by officials and liberals in the *Vormärz*, but reform-minded conservatives required the shock of the revolutions to successfully implement such developments.

The work undertaken by the Brandenburg-Manteuffel and Manteuffel Ministries of State to implement long-desired reforms had significant ramifications for politics in the 1850s and the 'New Era'. In the first instance, it meant that any conservatives who pursued rigidly doctrinaire positions found it difficult to influence state-building. The ultraconservatives of the *Camarilla* were forced to attempt to influence Friedrich Wilhelm IV without the kind of powerbase they had enjoyed in the autumn of 1848, or through new parliamentary factions. Similarly, doctrinaire liberals were obligated to form factions that were equally unsuccessful. Moderate conservatives and moderate liberals with an eye to reform were best placed to influence the ministry in the Prussian parliament but even they showed frustrations with the Manteuffel Ministry of State. For example, Manteuffel's willingness to compromise constitutional realities was far greater than many conservatives closest to the political centre were able to tolerate. In particular, Moritz August von Bethmann-Hollweg withdrew his support for the Manteuffel Ministry of State, founding a political faction around the *Preussisches Wochenblatt*. The faction claimed to be 'neither oppositional nor ministerial', clearly highlighting that the means by which Manteuffel secured progress was not always appealing.<sup>51</sup>

The determination of Manteuffel to consolidate the place of the Ministry of State on the Prussian landscape was something that Bismarck would develop in the years after the end of the Manteuffel Ministry of State in 1858. Despite Bismarck's later attempts to distance

<sup>51</sup> M. Hewitson, *Nationalism in Germany, 1848–1866: Revolutionary Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 176.

himself from the persons and politics of the 1850s, it is clear that his experiences and observations in the 1850s informed much of his political career. Moreover, it was not merely the new political style and structures that influenced state-building in the 'New Era' and beyond. The reforms of the 1850s were, in general, instrumental to the making of modern Germany. Advances to governing crime, trade, urban life, and the press would have a significant impact on many of the state-building measures undertaken before unification and in Germany afterwards.

## 13 'The Goal of That Pure and Noble Yearning' Friedrich Meinecke's Visions of 1848

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*Duncan Kelly*

### I 1848 and *Realpolitik*

The revolutionary contagion which flowed across national boundaries in Europe throughout 1848 signalled a powerfully internationalist moment in the development of revolutionary politics. Its most potent textual signifier was surely the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels.<sup>1</sup> But the internationalist promise and perspective was combined with an equally powerful tendency towards an often-romantic vision of nationalism on the part of those artisans, liberals, and intellectuals who helped to make individual revolutions possible.<sup>2</sup> Both sides, however, claimed the mantle of realism. Whether by acting in accordance with what was taken to embody a real, rather than an idealised, will of the people, or declaiming the realities of hierarchy against the utopian dreams of equality, revolutionaries as well as reactionaries hitched their prescriptive language to what Lewis Namier once rather archly traduced as their seeking the legitimating mantle of *Realpolitik*.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the intellectual history of *Realpolitik* as a term of art in the aftermath of the immediate failures of 1848 to actualise their liberal demands has an intriguing history. The terminology, which would become infamous during Bismarck's rise to power and which was memorialised in the historical reconstruction of the German nation by Heinrich von Treitschke, was at first the principal concept in the reorientation of progressive politics in the wake of temporary failure by the radical journalist, publicist, and local politician August Ludwig von Rochau.<sup>4</sup>

With thanks to Joshua Smeltzer for careful reading and comment, Isaac Nakhimovsky for numerous conversations about Meinecke, and the editors for their patience and support.

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, G. Stedman Jones (ed.) (London: Penguin, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> P. Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary', *New Left Review* 14 (2002), pp. 5–25.

<sup>3</sup> L. Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals [1944]* (New York: Anchor, 1964), pp. 14, 35, 37.

<sup>4</sup> See N. Doll, *Recht, Politik und "Realpolitik" bei August Ludwig von Rochau (1810–1873)* (Frankfurt A.M.: Klostermann, 2005), pp. 11–20, and F. von Weech, 'Rochau, August

An outline of its basic contours in his *Grundsätze der Realpolitik* (1853) showed a broad conspectus of what Rochau thought realistic political analysis required – a sense of history, of the shifting constellations of opposed political and social forces, of the constraints and opportunities in the struggle for power across those different dimensions of society and politics, and the crucial animating power of ideas that aligned with or distorted those forces and claims. It was, in short, a perspective through which to explain the failure of the German revolutionary project in 1848 with reference to the disconnect between the timeliness of those ideas of parliamentary democracy and bourgeois political leadership that motivated it, and the contemporary impossibility of its realisation given the constellation of reactionary forces drawn from church, state, and military at the time. Rochau's *Realpolitik* pursued these ideas about plausibility, possibility, and temporality, through a later, second edition of the text and multiple occasional writings in between, offering two interesting thoughts. One is that *Realpolitik* is clearly a contingent term; what constitutes realistic politics and realistic political analysis is situational and intellectual, and requires a discriminating eye to discern *how* short-term movements might be understood within longer-term processes. It is the name for a process that is always in fact in motion, and which in more conventional parlance might simply be thought of as a primer in the study of politics itself. Another thought suggests that the correct discernment of this process can help to explain *when* ideas do in fact become timely, because the agency to implement them and the constellation of forces around them becomes irresistible.<sup>5</sup> Again, it is a question of judgement, but in Rochau's hands it permits two further claims about *Realpolitik* in Germany in the wake of 1848 when seen from the perspective of the first and second editions of his work. First, that the national idea was not defeated in 1848, simply that its inevitable realisation was deferred, and that there were various possible futures open to national liberalism in the early text. Second, from a distance of twenty years, the second book of *Realpolitik* claimed that German national sentiment could be practically realised only by its reconciliation with Prussian power. And this was given force and form in the gradual move towards national unification paved by Bismarck through his *Realpolitik*-style expansionism between the Crimean and then the

Ludwig von', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1889) [online edition]: [www.deutschebiographie.de/pnd118790781.html](http://www.deutschebiographie.de/pnd118790781.html).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. C. Clark, 'After 1848: The European revolution in government', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (2012), pp. 171–97, esp. pp. 178, 182f, 191–94.

Franco-Prussian wars. Bismarck made the intellectual inevitability of the national idea practically possible as a state form.<sup>6</sup>

The vagaries and analytical slippages across Rochau's texts, with their Hegelian residue of ethical and political reconciliation as a dialectical work in continuous process, seemed rather quickly to fall away from mainstream political discourse. Even if his account of the coming into being in the 1850s and 1860s of ideas first mooted in the later 1840s turned out to align with that later refashioning of German liberalism, he remained very much an absent presence. Indeed, he is today very little known, though he can be seen as an important hidden presence in the dialogues about *Realpolitik* which dominated Anglo-American political theory and international relations for much of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> In comparison with the vibrant contours of Marx's situational writings that provide more direct, class-based accounts of contemporary political strengths and weaknesses in a Franco-German perspective, Rochau's text remains frustratingly suspended between description and explanation, though it was clearly first pitched as a revision to left liberalism in Germany.<sup>8</sup> And his journalistic flair caught something of the *Zeitgeist* he was keen to contextualise, but it also meant that his work was rather general.<sup>9</sup> When taken forward by the institutionally grounded claims of his friend and political colleague Heinrich von Treitschke, however, Rochau's account of *Realpolitik* found a much more determinate, and less obviously idealistic, retrofit as justification for Prussian power politics. Here, a natural longing for national unity across the peoples of Europe, most obviously in rising and powerful states such as Germany and Italy, was given form and content through the actions of great and visionary leaders, such as Garibaldi and Bismarck. *Realpolitik* had simply become the activity of powerful statecraft and leadership.<sup>10</sup> Was there a way, however, of repurposing and re-envisioning the longer-term

<sup>6</sup> A. L. Rochau, *Grundsätze der Realpolitik angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschlands* (Stuttgart: Karl Göpel, 1853); followed by an unchanged second edition in 1859 but with a new introduction; then a new work with the same title, *Grundsätze der Realpolitik angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschlands, Zweiter Theil* (Heidelberg: J. C. B. Mohr, 1869). See also Duncan Kelly, 'August Ludwig von Rochau and *Realpolitik* as Historical Political Theory', *Global Intellectual History* (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23801883.2017.1387331>.

<sup>7</sup> J. Bew, *Realpolitik: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. Parts III–IV.

<sup>8</sup> See C. Jansen, *Einheit, Macht und Freiheit: Die Paulskirchenlinie und die deutsche Politik in der nachrevolutionären Epoche, 1849–1867* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Rochau, *Grundsätze der Realpolitik* (1853), pp. 12f.

<sup>10</sup> See H. von Treitschke, 'August Ludwig von Rochau', *Historische und Politische Aufsätze*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1897), vol. IV, esp. pp. 189–90, 193–95, 496ff; cf. S. A. Kaehler, 'Realpolitik zur Zeit des Krimkrieges – Eine Sekulärbetrachtung', *Historische Zeitschrift* 174/2 (1952), pp. 417–78.

history of the rise of German nationalism to make the pursuit of power as *Realpolitik* morally justifiable?

Put another way, could the alternatives of merely calculating and egoistic forms of state-based *Realpolitik* focused around individual statesmanship be avoided as an account of what politics required, while at the same salvaging the lineaments of Rochau's contextual sense of what a realistic appraisal of German politics entailed? To do so would require deeper and more careful attention to the particular ideas that lay behind the rise of German nationalism in particular, and an awareness of the complexity of combining politics and ethics in the figure of the statesman and the personality of the state itself. It would first have to pay attention to the alternatives offered by conventional and contemporary liberal accounts of the rise of the modern nation-states as part of a cosmopolitan history of humanity, which would see the realisation of liberal humanity in the eventual cultivation of a civilised world of nations. The person who took on this challenge most thoroughly, and who became the preeminent practitioner of a genetic and empathetic history of ideas (*Ideengeschichte*) in German academic life, was the historian Friedrich Meinecke. This chapter is concerned to outline the various ways in which he developed an account of German nationalism out of its romantic and cosmopolitan roots, particularly across the transformative moments of the Wars of Liberation, the 1848 Revolutions, and German unification that might avoid the binaries, crudely put, that come from separating politics from morality. Rather than use the terminology of *Realpolitik*, however, he tried to theorise the German nation-state through the idea that it combined in essence a morally constrained reason of state (*Staatsräson*). Such reason of state, when aligned to a sense of nationality, placed the bedrock of state action (*salus populi*) in the context of modern politics that required justification through public welfare, understood broadly as economic growth, rather than the personal glory or *grandezza* of the prince.

## II Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, Personality

By making reason of state modern, national, and liberal, Meinecke thought he could reconcile the antinomies of modern political theory through the conjoined personality of the modern state and its representative sovereign, the prudential statesman as constitutional monarch. Because of this, his first concern had to be to account for the peculiar construction of the modern state personality after Machiavelli and Hobbes. If the welfare of the state is the primary issue, but reason of state understood either as sovereignty or *grandezza* is insufficient to

constrain the malign effects of brute power politics, then Meinecke needed a 'bridge' between 'good' or 'bad' reason of state. In turn, this precluded him from a purely Hobbesian solution to the idea of state personality, because Hobbes' ideas were understood to be absolutist and irrelevant to thinking about the economic limits to modern politics. Yet if the pursuit of public wealth and welfare is to become the *salus populi* of the modern state, then the bridge between justification based on moral conviction and economic competition, and justification based on brute power politics, meant that the ethical connections Meinecke wants to defend are always in danger of tilting towards one side or another of the divides of is and ought, of causality and indeterminacy, of power and ethics. Indeed, he well knew that the state was always capable in principle of simply doing evil, precisely because it is a living idea (*Lebensidee*), connected to its organic nature in a form of entelechy, and all living things are capable of evil. The fact that he dedicated his historicist book on reason of state to Ernst Troeltsch vouchsafed that connection.<sup>11</sup>

Yet his method of intellectual reconstruction of this broad array of ideas is a diffuse mix of genetic, empathetic, and ethical history, within what seems to be a truly panentheistic framework. That permits him to imagine a nation which did not yet exist, and use it as a perspective from which to judge the present and future realities of modern German politics as the elaboration of a divine plan.<sup>12</sup> So although his first task was to elaborate the contours of German nationalism as a unification of the individual and the state through the broad idea of personality, the first major challenge to that reading would come in thinking about how to repurpose this historical canvas to explain German nationalism during the First World War. In its wake, he reconsidered the nature of German politics within the long-term history of ideas about reason of state, trying to salvage historicist readings of texts with an elaboration of the ethical bridge between good and bad forms of reason of state through the movement of history. Then again, during the Weimar Republic and especially after the Second World War, he was compelled to think about how the possibilities of German history that might have bridged the divide between justice and reason of state had tipped obviously onto one side of that divide again, culminating in a tyrannical form of mass-Machiavellianism. His final attempt to reconsider the historical legacy for contemporary politics notably took him back to 1848 as a major turning point in German history, but one whose potential had not yet been properly realised. In effect, he was trying to put extra

<sup>11</sup> F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1925), pp. 6, 12.

<sup>12</sup> R. A. Krol, 'Friedrich Meinecke: Pantheism and the crisis of historicism', *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 4 (2010), pp. 195–209, at 197.



intellectual flesh on the skeleton of Rochau's analysis of *Realpolitik* as a form of analysis connecting long-term demands for national unity in a German perspective to the short-term analysis of the forms of power that could best realise it. This meant combining cosmopolitan nationalism with reason of state through both the history of ideas as well as prudential statesmanship through the personality of those in charge of the ship of state. Only the figure of the representative state personality as sovereign in general, conjoined with the real figure of the prudential statesman at its head, might account for this new form of personality-based reason of state appropriate to an age of liberalism and nationalism.

A hope for prudence and wise leadership had first fixed the terminus of Rochau's vision, and Bismarck for him represented a singular future of promise for the future, an instance where the movement of nationality could become universal.<sup>13</sup> For Meinecke, living with the realities of what Bismarck's promise actually delivered in terms of class-conflict, social democracy, and the disconnect between political capacity and economic prowess among the rising middle-class, the practical results were certainly more ambivalent. If the initial promise of *Realpolitik* had been to signal a German *Sonderweg* that would subsume the dilemmas of Western political theory and provide a model to explain failed politics elsewhere, it ended up providing an alternative *Sonderweg* thesis, one that would have to explain precisely why German politics had failed to become the sort of democracy it seemed destined to become. Having hoped to avoid the binaries of politics in practice, it became fixed as a binary of political analysis, which in turn fixed the binaries of historiography about German politics and history for generations.<sup>14</sup>

There are, broadly, two conventional claims about the direction of Meinecke's intellectual path through political thought and its history. The first concerns the idea of a break between the moral synthesis of cosmopolitan cultural argument and the unification of the German state under Bismarck in *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat* (1907), and the opposition between political power and ethical culture, or between 'kratos' and 'ethos', in his history of the idea of reason of state, *Die Idee der Staatsräson* (1924). The transformative moment in the development of his apparently new synthesis is routinely taken to be the First World War.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> F. Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the Nation State* [1907] trans. R. B. Kimber (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> On which see D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> See R. Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke and German Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972), p. 50; G. G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History* [1968] (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), ch. 7.

The second, related position holds that Meinecke's concern with the problems of historicism hardened after the Great War, but that his account of its eighteenth-century origins provided in *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (1936) holds some continuities with, in particular, the first half of his book on cosmopolitanism, by focusing attention on the sorts of historical writings about individuality and culture that might best be thought of as historicist, from the English 'pre-Romantics' to the Celtic fringe of Edmund Burke and Adam Ferguson, and from Herder's attempt to discern a harmonious 'rhythm' in history that could ground its balance (*gleichgewicht*), to the flowering of individuality under Goethe in Germany.<sup>16</sup> Those who have sought to go beyond these polarities in turn either suggest that it was the continuation of his interest in historicism that provides a form of unity in his work, albeit differently conceptualised in different places, or that his commitment to a form of cosmopolitan nationalism remains throughout. It seems to me that the claims are two sides of the same coin, because he did not see any contradiction between historicism, liberalism, and ethics, and in fact saw himself as elaborating the position of Ernst Troeltsch on historicism, but in the field of modern intellectual history and the state. His work on *Staatsräson* was, after all, initially conceived as a book on the arts of the state and the position of history (*Staatskunst und Geschichtsauffassung*).<sup>17</sup>

In his study of *Cosmopolitanism and the Nation State*, Meinecke fixed the direction of the 1848 Revolutions in Germany as part of an intellectual trajectory wherein the autonomous state personality conjured by the German romantics in the early nineteenth century was compelled to 'sacrifice itself to the idea of the nation', because the 'blood of this state personality was needed to nourish Germany'. Prussia was the '*ver sacrum* of Germany'.<sup>18</sup> Meinecke hereby offered a dual history of the theory and practice of German ideas about the personality of the state, from the Seven Years War through to discussions of conservative romanticism, in works ranging from Adam Müller and Wilhelm von Humboldt to Friedrich von Haller and Hegel. As he wrote at the beginning of the second half of his study, its first part had 'showed how the idea of autonomous state personalities made itself felt in Germany in the flood of new ideas and demands that rose up from the depths of national life'.<sup>19</sup> The romantic-conservatism

<sup>16</sup> F. Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* [1936] *Werke*, Bd. 3, C. Hinrichs (ed.) (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1959), quotations on p. 425. Cf. T. Paddock, 'Rethinking Friedrich Meinecke's Historicism', *Rethinking History* 10/1 (2006), pp. 95–108, esp. p. 101; F. Meinecke, *Vom geschichtlichen Sinn und vom Sinn der Geschichte* (Leipzig: Koehler & Ameland, 1939), p. 125.

<sup>17</sup> Krol, 'Panentheism', p. 199.

<sup>18</sup> Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 235, 263, 285; Paddock, 'Historicism', p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 233.

of these visions of the state as a sort of cultural personality, one embodied by a particular sense of national *Kultur*, however, could only be given form through practical action. If the *Kultur* of the romantics was one side of Meinecke's historical vision, the political nation, or the nation-state, was the model of territorial integrity and the unity of a particular people who shared those particular romantic-conservative staples of language, culture, sentiment and so on. The task of modern state-driven politics was to harmonise the two spheres into a new and unified state person, and there had been hints at when and where to look for the origins of this moment in the work of Johann Kaspar Bluntschli who had, as would Meinecke, sought the Enlightenment origins of the modern nation-state in the legislative visions of Frederick the Great rather than in the outdated political theories of Hobbes (who led to Rousseau and French revolutionary tyranny) or Machiavelli (who needed to be radically revised if he was to be made safe for modern German political unification).<sup>20</sup> The passage to relatively late political unification, radically hinted at in the revolutionary year of 1848, was therefore only a part of a broader reform of German political culture since 1806. It was this longer-run perspective that allowed Meinecke to disavow any particular disconnect between what he saw as 'old' versus 'national' liberalism or Prussianism versus modern social democracy, which seems to have signalled for him a particularly divisive schism.<sup>21</sup>

The radical request from writers like Fichte had been that Prussia was precisely the state that needed to sacrifice itself to the demands of German nationhood, but as Meinecke notes, Prussia 'was both the means of and the hindrance to converting the non-political German cultural nation into a German political nation'.<sup>22</sup> Various struggles to reconcile these accounts into a coherent vision of German nationhood under the liberal lead of Prussia were countenanced, through historical personalities Meinecke had long been interested in (from Field Marshal Boyen, whose biography was Meinecke's first major subject of research, or Moser, to Gneisenau and Pfizer and Stein). Baron vom Stein's (Heinrich Friedrich Karl vom und zum Stein) bureaucratic reforms mattered here, because the relationship between administrative practice and service became seen as a way to overcome a selfish form of individualism.<sup>23</sup> It was an argument

<sup>20</sup> D. Kelly, 'Popular Sovereignty as State Theory in the Nineteenth-Century' in R. Bourke and Q. Skinner (eds.) *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 270–96.

<sup>21</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Nationalliberal und "Altliberal"', [1912] *Politische Schriften und Reden, Werke*, Bd. 2, G. Kotowski (ed.) (Darmstadt: Siegfried Toeche-Mittler, 1958), pp. 61–64, at p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 235. <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

also taken up in England by the Cambridge historian J. R. Seeley.<sup>24</sup> Yet Stein's vision was limited, according to Meinecke, for he had failed to grasp the neo-classical 'significance' of individualism, which had itself rendered forms of 'state socialism' (a problem from Fichte to the Weimar Republic for Meinecke) unthinkable.<sup>25</sup> The similarity of concern, from the French Revolution to the Wars of Liberation, was obvious to Meinecke, but the different solutions proffered by German writers like Hardenburg, for example, prompted the thought about a naturalness of a *Kleindeutsch* solution. Here, the 'democratic principles in a monarchic government' permitted Prussian primacy over a cosmopolitan Germany, which is to say, it married the practicalities of power-politics with the moral ideals of German nationhood.<sup>26</sup> Further municipal and economic reforms, combined with the move from standing armies to popular armies, channelled anti-Napoleonic sentiment, and combined antipathy for Bonapartism as neo-Roman tyranny with a new account of sacred state-egoism governed by German national liberalism.<sup>27</sup> This move showed profound connections to Fichte's analyses of modern wars based on a demand for identity and freedom, though both his contemporary and Meinecke's later renderings of these anti-Napoleonic moments of liberation were themselves directed to an as yet non-existent Germany, which was only in the process of being constructed by intellectuals and activists, and framed through the presentation of France as the national enemy.<sup>28</sup>

The extent of this idealised liberal-national state and, more specifically, the extent of its real outer limits were precisely the federal boundaries of German liberalism that shaped constitutional debates

<sup>24</sup> Cf. J. R. Seeley, *Life and Times of Stein, or, Germany and Prussia in the Napoleonic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1878); on Seeley generally, and his connections to Henry Sidgwick and the Cambridge History Tripos that filtered some of these claims through the use of Bluntschli as a standard textbook for parading its worries about modern Caesarism as a form of socialism, see also D. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), ch. 6; B. Schultz, *Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 563; S. Collini, D. Winch and J. Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), ch. 9.

<sup>25</sup> F. Meinecke, *The Age of German Liberation 1795–1815* trans. P. Paret and H. Fischer (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, [1906] 1977), p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53. <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 70.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. M. Hewitson, 'Belligerence, patriotism and nationalism in the German public sphere, 1792–1815', *English Historical Review* 78/553 (2013), esp. pp. 842, 845; C. Clark, 'The Wars of Liberation in Prussian memory', *Journal of Modern History* 68/3 (1996) 550–576. For a wider account of Fichte's political economy, see I. Nakhimovsky, *The Closed Commercial State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

about parliamentarism and democracy in 1848.<sup>29</sup> The questions raised then were, of course, questions that Meinecke believed in 1907 'have remained unsolved to this day', and he devotes a great deal of time to the practical machinations involved in the arguments of Max von Gagern about how to pursue a maximally liberal principle of nationality that could reconcile and equalise relations between the different component parts of the German-speaking lands.<sup>30</sup> Relatedly, the historian Johann Gustav Droysen is made to stand in for the voice of liberal nationality filtered through Prussian leadership or hegemony (the lustrous quality, literally the Prussian 'x' factor, that made its leadership both natural and possible that Droysen had outlined), wherein what 1847–48 signals is the eventual merging of Prussia with the rest of Germany, without the need for pre-determined constitutional plans and programmes.<sup>31</sup> It was re-described as part of an organic process of national self-determination according to the Hegelian demands of political timeliness.<sup>32</sup> And Droysen's historical methodology was of great importance to Meinecke.<sup>33</sup>

These oppositions broadly frame the intellectual context within which Meinecke outlined the practical conflicts between the constitutional demands of the Frankfurt and Berlin Parliaments and the realities of Prussian hegemony, tracing their attendant complexities, twists, and turns, until the promulgation of the Prussian constitution in December 1848.<sup>34</sup> The 'imported' and 'schematic liberalism' of the new constitution was a consequence of the fact that an original and organic 'body of ideas' had been 'interrupted' by now 'troubled times'.<sup>35</sup> The incipient conservatism of Prussia and the apparently natural tenor of its dominance, thought adequate enough by Ranke to pursue its ends without interference, simply presumes, in Meinecke's rendering, a 'higher' updating of the attempt to reconcile *Kultur* and *Nation* outlined in the first half of

<sup>29</sup> Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 245; cf. p. 347, on the 'prejudice against parliamentary government' in German political thought.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250, 252.

<sup>31</sup> Krol, 'Pantheism', p. 205. Cf. Perry Anderson, *The H-Word. The Peripeteia of Hegemony* (London: Verso, 2017), pp. 7–9.

<sup>32</sup> Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 257f.

<sup>33</sup> Krol, 'Pantheism', p. 205. Droysen's account of the history of recent wars of liberation in terms of the relationship between the state, material interests, and intellectual development in comparative perspective was similarly crucial. See J. G. Droysen, *Vorlesungen über die Freiheitskriege*, 2 vols. (Kiel: Universitäts Buchhandlung 1846).

<sup>34</sup> Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 265, 267, 269, 272, 277, 329, 349 (on Treitschke's ambiguous account of Prussian hegemony, which recognised that local political power and federal political structures could not be readily aligned).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

his book, at the same time as it signals a clear opposition between 'old' and 'new' forms of political history that emerged in the wake of the revolutionary moment.<sup>36</sup> This opposition in the life of the mind thus reflected the opposition that would continue to structure German life and culture prior to full unification. Between the fact that 'Germany had struggled to win Prussia in 1848–49', while Prussia had 'struggled to win Germany in 1866', lay an entire historiography of German possibility. Though it was latterly repurposed into a story of Prussian leadership in the creation of the German nation-state by Treitschke, it was for Meinecke a move that tried to overcome the weaknesses of excessive particularism and parliamentarism that he feared would derail the project of unification, but which remained in line with his sense of its panentheistic justification. The true individuality of German statehood could not fail to be appropriately ethical, or so it seemed until the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>37</sup>

### III The Great War and 1848

In an introduction, dated 1 August 1916, to the new edition of Leopold von Ranke's *Die größten Mächte*, Meinecke sounded a powerful note about the continued resonance of Ranke's own 'melody', one that focused on the relationship between the struggle for existence, independence, and individuality that formed the bedrock of national politics, most importantly during times of war.<sup>38</sup> And although he noted that it was not quite the right place to engage in an intellectual-historical critique of Ranke's account of the 'genesis' of his theory, he did note that the precursors (*Vorläufer*) of the primacy of foreign policy and romantic visions of nationhood were to be found in those figures who had made up the first book of his analysis of *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*. He also corrected Ranke over the dating of Frederick the Great's youthful work *Considérations sur l'état présent du Corps Politique de l'Europe* (1738, not 1736), in which a vision of the primacy of individual national interests could be discerned. The early combination of Frederick, enlightened absolutism, and the masculine state personality directing the individuality of the nation through its external as much as its internal relations showed that very much the same sort of vision that Meinecke held in 1907 about German national development and culture remained a strong presence

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 320, 323.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 341, 345f, 364, 373f; Krol, 'Panentheism', pp. 201–5.

<sup>38</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Einleitung' [1916] Leopold von Ranke, *Die größten Mächte* (Insel: Leipzig, 1916).

amid the First World War. In fact, although Meinecke's analysis of the Great War was grounded in his account of the history of ideas, it was also part of a thoroughly conventional worldview with respect to the lineage connecting 1848 to 1914. Since the original springtime of the peoples and German conflict with Denmark, national politics had divided between a 'cool, hard' reason of state grounded in political calculation and an 'emotional flood' (*aufwallenden Empfindungen*) of nationalist visions.<sup>39</sup> Under the contemporary conditions of submarine warfare and economic blockade, it was crucial to understand the need to balance technical calculation of political and economic possibilities with a sense of this longer-term perspective. Moreover, although he would come to criticise Ranke's idea of the spiritualisation of power, Meinecke himself did exactly that in his attempt to bridge and hence keep in check the forces of power and ethics in politics. It was the only way to maintain his commitment to the bridge, while recognising that the bridge itself could never be safe; it was, in effect, its own sort of political theology, something interestingly enough he seemed to recognise in his memorial speech given for Ranke.<sup>40</sup>

At the outset of the Great War, one that many German intellectuals like Max Weber thought would be truly 'great and wonderful' precisely because it would be forced to provide national answers to the questions raised by the crisis of historicism, Meinecke seemed as ardent as many colleagues. Almost as soon as it began, the war was already a battle for ideas, an intellectual form of *Geisterkrieg*.<sup>41</sup> And the most famous of those sorts of reflections, undertaken by Johann Plenge, an historian of socialism and the modern social sciences, explicitly sought to connect the battle to a wider argument about how issues of organisation and autonomy in socialist doctrine could be reconciled through new forms of national co-ordination at war. To do so, he constructed a history of ideas that ran together a claim about the political theory of freedom in the French Revolution and the practical needs of German wartime mobilisation around 1914. He saw the Great War as the only great revolution to have occurred since 1789, and it concerned the rise of modern socialism

<sup>39</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Unsere Lage' [1916] *Politische Schriften und Reden*, pp. 130–32, at p. 130; for broader discussion, see R. W. Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power: The Political Ideas of Friedrich Meinecke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 142, 146.

<sup>40</sup> Krol, 'Panentheism', pp. 204, 205; F. Meinecke, 'Gedächtnisrede: Leopold von Ranke' [1936], repr. *Entstehung des Historismus*, pp. 585–602, esp. pp. 589, 597 (contrasting the unimportance of Hegelian Pantheism in contrast to a broader Panentheism that might clarify the divine order of history), pp. 598, 600 (linking Ranke to the account of historicism offered in his own discussion of Shaftesbury, among others).

<sup>41</sup> H. Kellermann (ed.), *Der Krieg der Geister* (Dresden: Kammingsche Buchdruckerei, 1915).



and the concentration of state power.<sup>42</sup> Yet Meinecke's own battle of ideas looked rather different.<sup>43</sup>

Imagining a future German state, on the basis of his transition towards a position of *Vernunftrepublikanismus* rather than the supporter of what is awkwardly translated as a sort of trusted dictator, or authoritarian constitutional monarch, a *Vertrauensdiktatur*, is the normal route through this period of Meinecke's political theory.<sup>44</sup> In both cases he had been concerned to present a version of himself as a scholar and teacher who had a national educational task, and whose fellow professors, publicists, and high-school teachers were all crafting anew a specifically German idea of freedom, one that made sense of the progressive advance of German politics through the progressive development of its parties and political personalities.<sup>45</sup> Under wartime conditions, it was simply a basic fact of German foreign policy that it required a *Vertrauensdiktatur*.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, it is interesting to think that while Carl Schmitt would castigate Meinecke's division of reason of state into moral oppositions, his own history of dictatorship similarly bifurcates a complex tradition into a commissarial or sovereign style of either prudential management or radical renewal, and that where Schmitt seeks the solution to conceptual oppositions in what many think of as a form of political theology, it looks like Meinecke did much the same.<sup>47</sup>

Unlike such radical critics, however, Meinecke did not think that the development of political parties necessarily results in anti-democratic tendencies.<sup>48</sup> Even amid the tense Anglo-German antagonism that continued throughout the Balkan Wars, Meinecke retained an optimistic sense that the expectation of war or conflict was a necessary component

<sup>42</sup> J. Plenge, *1789 und 1914: Die Symbolischen Jahre in der Geschichte des politischen Geistes* (Berlin: Springer, 1916), pp. 174, and pp. 63–69; cf. *Der Krieg und die Volkswirtschaft* (Münster: Borgmeyer, 1915), p. 153; discussion in M. Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken im Krieg* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), p. 36; J. Müller, *Die "Ideen von 1914" bei Johann Plenge und in der zeitgenössischen Diskussion: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Ersten Weltkrieges* (Neuried: Ars Una, 2001), pp. 62, 72.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. K. Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg: Ein Versuch* (Berlin: Alexander Fest, 2000), ch. 3.

<sup>44</sup> See H. Kuelting, "'Vernunftrepublikanismus" und "Vertrauensdiktatur" – Friedrich Meinecke in der Weimarer Republik', *Historische Zeitschrift* 242/1 (1986), pp. 69–98, at p. 75.

<sup>45</sup> S. Meinecke, 'Friedrich Meinecke und der "Krieg der Geister"', in W. Mommsen (ed.) *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 97–118, at pp. 101, 103.

<sup>46</sup> Meinecke, 'Unsere Lage', *Politische Schriften und Reden*, p. 132.

<sup>47</sup> See D. Kelly, 'Introduction: Carl Schmitt's Critique of Friedrich Meinecke', and C. Schmitt, 'Remarks on Friedrich Meinecke's *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and Its Place in Modern History*', trans. K. Tribe, *Max Weber Studies* 17/1 (2017).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Paddock, 'Historicism', p. 105.

part of a harmonious (in the sense of tensely balanced and ordered) world made up of greater and lesser powers, large states and small states in the competitive global economy.<sup>49</sup> Forms of what Karl Kraus satirised as the 'techno-romantic adventure' of the war were rife in the rapid moves towards its glorification that was undertaken by the class of German *Gelehrtenpolitik*. This was precisely because they thought they had properly understood the nature of war and peace in an international perspective, but, as Kraus suggested, the dissonance between technological superiority and political control created power vacuums that threatened stability.<sup>50</sup> Others, of course, saw more generally, and continued to see in the aftermath of the war, a 'moral catastrophe' for German nationhood, one that would, in turn, chime with the sort of Allied propaganda campaign that had sought the origins of the Great War in the history of German, particularly Prussian, militarism.<sup>51</sup> In the summer of 1914, however, his ambivalence about global war was tempered. Neither absolute war euphoria nor a correspondingly doom-laden sense that this was the death of politics pushed Meinecke to think merely that his optimistic sense of German political and cultural development in a liberal direction through the *Kaiserreich* was suffering a temporary reversal. Democratic parliamentarism was perturbed, but what could have prevented war was not less democracy of a peculiarly German sort, but rather less state violence.<sup>52</sup> It was precisely militaristic chauvinism that had unduly divided Germany during wartime, he wrote, because it had found its form in the vacillating figures of the Kaiser and the chancellor, whose personal weaknesses and personal forms of rule made reform of the Prussian electoral system so particularly difficult.<sup>53</sup> Given his thought that the statesman's conscience will provide a sure guide to the right course of action only if their background account of how the world itself is structured is correct, and therefore how politics ultimately requires the confidence that comes from certainty about the divine ordering of the world, Meinecke could readily find contemporary leaders wanting.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, alongside Otto Hintze, he edited a gargantuan volume of essays with the title *Deutschland und die Weltkrieg*, containing discussions by Ernst Troeltsch, Hintze, August Oncken, Gustav Schmoller, and

<sup>49</sup> Meinecke, 'Meinecke', p. 105.

<sup>50</sup> See E. Timms, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 323.

<sup>51</sup> P. Rohrbach, *Politische Erziehung* (Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn, 1919), p. 27.

<sup>52</sup> Meinecke, 'Meinecke', p. 113.

<sup>53</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Osterbotschaft, Wahlreform und parlamentarisches Regime' [1917] *Politische Schriften und Reden*, pp. 174–180, at p. 176.

<sup>54</sup> Krol, 'Panentheism', p. 206.

others. One contributor noted the continuity between ancient and modern forms of warfare grounded on the idea of there being wars of destruction (*Vernichtungskriege*), and that tactics like concentration camps were (using the example of Churchill's reports on the South African campaigns) simply a means to an end.<sup>55</sup> For Meinecke, more akin to the views of Troeltsch on the 'meaning' of the war and the legacy as he understood it of Ranke's political history, it was less the development of technical capacity and more about the correct understanding of the power of German conceptions of national culture and its honourable individuality.<sup>56</sup> The relationship between the means and the ends could only be justified if they served the ends of that vaguely defined term, *Kultur*.

Meinecke would, of course, also suggest that this meant a specifically German vision of Eastern Europe, wherein the sphere of *Mittleuropa* would become part of Berlin's sphere of influence. This had been of crucial importance, and Naumann's discussion of *Mittleuropa* aligned well with the idea of a geopolitical sphere of influence and security for modern Germany, a ring-fenced territorial extent that was the fruit of war, but which could in theory, also provide security for all time.<sup>57</sup> Meinecke was moved, on New Year's Eve 1916, to discern what he called the legal and political 'rhythms of the world war' after dismal years of fighting in such terms. For although the war had begun in a 'political sense' as a 'defensive' war (*Verteidigungskrieg*), it was also, in a military sense, a war over prowess (*Niederwerfungskrieg*).<sup>58</sup> Yet the attempt to enact Clausewitz's doctrines on the battlefield through Moltke and Hindenburg had fallen short in terms of the political options they opened up, just as they had fallen short before with Napoleon and Gneisenau. Why? In the first place, because political choice and military tactics hadn't adequately aligned. It was, he thought, an obvious lesson of the conflict that claims of honour and prestige could not and should not be the arbiters of future success, when the only 'viable political solution of the future' instead must be 'balance' (*Gleichgewicht*), and that required

<sup>55</sup> A. Miethe, Friedrich Meinecke, 'Krieg und Menschlichkeit', in O. Hintze, F. Meinecke, H. Oncken and H. Schumacher (eds.) *Deutschland und die Weltkrieg* (Berlin and Leipzig: Teubner, 1915), pp. 593–616, at p. 596, and n. 7.

<sup>56</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Kultur, Machtpolitik und Militarismus', *Deutschland und die Weltkrieg*, pp. 617–43, esp. pp. 636f; also E. Troeltsch, 'Der Geist der deutschen Kultur', *Deutschland und die Weltkrieg*, pp. 52–90, esp. p. 65, on the 'deep differences' between Anglo-Saxon and Latin conceptions of democracy.

<sup>57</sup> F. Naumann, *Mittleuropa* (Berlin: Reimer, 1915), p. 262; cf. A. Watson, *Ring of Steel* (London: Penguin, 2015), ch. 6.

<sup>58</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Der Rhythmus des Weltkriegs' [1916] *Politische Schriften und Reden*, pp. 137–145, at p. 137.

a sense of political possibility for a Germany looking east.<sup>59</sup> In making these claims on the basis of the new political situation thrown up by the practicalities of a global war, Meinecke's gaze nonetheless fixed back upon his own intellectual histories of German liberation.<sup>60</sup> The relationship between state and individual in terms of cultivation and perfectibility through *Kultur* that had been so crucial to his account of early nineteenth-century Germany had now become distorted. After a century of intellectual, technical, and economic progress and competition between European states, the 'fearful abuse' (*furchtbare Mißbrauch*) of *Kultur* in and through the institutions of the state had become clear, as well as through the rise of pan-Germanism.<sup>61</sup> This was the triumph again of the temporal, rather than the eternal, characteristic of the power-politics of all great states and empires. The contingent and local side of this *Machtpolitik* was an immanent form of the classical dyspeptic condition of *pleonexia*, or engorgement, and had been a feature of all the great empires from the ancient world to the modern.<sup>62</sup> What this war might seem to make possible, however, was a reunification of *Kultur* and *Politik*, which had been pulled apart over the course of a previous decade of *Sammlungspolitik*, *Weltpolitik*, and *Kanzlerpolitik*. If this sort of unification between state and culture that had once been outlined by Kant in terms of the cultivation of a certain sort of craving after autonomy, the 'highest ideal' of modern life, then a re-unification of national personality with the cultivation of one's own true self as the member of a unified national community was made possible through the challenge of war. And if that could hold then the initial hope of the wars of liberation, the renewed attempt of the 1848 Revolutions, and the promise of national unification could be transformed anew into a glorious future through the struggle of an 'unbreakable national spirit for survival'.<sup>63</sup>

His historical writings on the relationship between Prussia and Germany in the nineteenth century continued, that is to say, to give perspective to his wartime writings. In an essay collection on that subject, which appeared in 1918 though whose preface dates from October of the previous year, Meinecke apportions his own wartime work under thematic headings of *Kultur*, Bismarck, and freedom (*Freiheit*). When writing

<sup>59</sup> Meinecke, 'Rhythmus des Weltkriegs', p. 142: 'Nicht Niederwerfung sondern Gleichgewicht heißt die politische Lösung der Zukunft'. Cf. Pois, *Meinecke and German Politics*.

<sup>60</sup> Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power*, pp. 148ff, 155, 159, 184.

<sup>61</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Politik und Kultur' [1914] *Politische Schriften und Reden*, pp. 76–82, at p. 77; cf. O. Nippold, *Dangerous Optimism* trans. from the German (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918), p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> Meinecke, 'Politik und Kultur', p. 80. <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 82.

about Bismarck in 1917, Meinecke took note of his initial struggle to reconcile into a new synthesis the demands of an authoritarian politics based on strict sovereign control (*Herrschaftsstaat*), and the requirements of politics based on a vision of the common good (*Gemeinwesen*). He then tracks the different co-ordinates that constrained Bismarck's vision of global politics and economics, that is his certainty that the next war in the continued struggle for German existence (*Dasein*) would take the form of 'economic war', and ultimately compares his futurism with contemporary accounts of *Weltpolitik* and *Weltwirtschaft*.<sup>64</sup> Importantly, however, he notes that Bismarck has gone beyond the simple fact of being an empirical man in contemporary Germany; he has become, additionally, 'a principle, an idea, a power', which in turn can help to make the world anew. Similarly, the original vision and promise of a particularly German idea of freedom, freedom through the state and its personality, signified something comparatively unique in European history, or so he continues to claim. Kant and Fichte are held up as originators, and Stein's administrative and political reforms elaborated institutional possibilities, but the competition between these ideas did not lead, as it did elsewhere, to an 'ideal type' of Western democracy. The German idea of freedom was instead, he wrote, an 'idea in movement'. Therefore, Allied attempts either to construct an alternative and negative or counter-genealogy of Germanic freedom, one based on state-egoism, militarism, and a distorted honour cult, simply failed to understand that rather than the 'either-or' of 'Western' democracy versus illiberalism, German political theory was itself a continuous evolutionary process, too dynamic to be fixed by conceptual boundaries. Those who sought then to 'democratise' Germany were only trying to 'disorganise' it, and properly misunderstood the roots of German authority (*Obrigkeit*) with its Lutheran foundation: *Distinguendum est* became his challenge, and Prussian electoral reform debates, full of their own scholastic categorisations, were cast very much in this by now highly elaborate and baroque historical canvas, full of distinctions that hinted at possibilities and processes, rather than rigid boundaries and cul-de-sacs.<sup>65</sup> Yet many thought he wondered too far up cul-de-sacs of his own making, because of his valorising of forms of statecraft that had led to the horrors of war.

<sup>64</sup> F. Meinecke, *Preußen und Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1918), pp. 522, 529. For a critical overview, see Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Von preußens Aufgabe in Deutschland zu Deutschlands Aufgabe in der welt. Liberalismus und Borussianisches Geschichtsbild Zwischen Revolution und Imperialismus', *Historische Zeitschrift* 231/2 (1980), pp. 265–324.

<sup>65</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Deutsche Freiheit' [1917] in *Preußen und Deutschland*, pp. 539, 543, 545; also Iggers, *German Conception of History*, p. 185, on the Lutheran *Obrigkeit* behind Troeltsch's distinction between Western and German conceptions of power.

For example, Meinecke also gave a lecture on ‘Staatskunst und Leidenschaften’ for the journal *Die Hilfe* on 28 September 1916, for which Franz Rosenzweig attacked him in private correspondence, saying he was merely a *Gelehrter*, not an activist, in his critique of Western models of democracy. That claim that would have stung, given Rosenzweig’s own direct experience in the trenches, experience that lay behind the discussion of *Realpolitik* in his own work *The Star of Redemption* and its account of the epistemological as well as political failings of idealism as philosophy.<sup>66</sup> Then, in attacking his article on the demobilisation of the intellectuals, Rosenzweig chided Meinecke for thinking in terms of the ‘state’ only, not in terms of an association or federation of states (*Staatenverbände*).<sup>67</sup> But if the generation of Friedrich Naumann, Meinecke, Ernst Troeltsch, and Max Weber had worried principally about political and economic anachronism in the context of modern industrialism, they nonetheless advocated for a continued role (in Naumann’s case) for a strong monarch amid the rise of democracy, expansive foreign policy, and a commitment to continued industrialisation.<sup>68</sup> Directing the German working classes towards the goals of a strong, industrialising nation-state required a synthetic perspective. In Meinecke’s hands, however, the ideas behind the cultivation of this German nation-state were precisely what needed clarification in the first place, and in itself, this was a direct form of political intervention in the historical development of Germany. *Gelehrtenpolitik*, a form of scholar’s politics, not the politics of scholarship, required engagement, as Meinecke well knew. He had written about its development extensively.<sup>69</sup> Thus, in Pois’ standard judgement, ‘Meinecke’s purely political writings of the pre-World War I and World War II period were based upon the presuppositions and

<sup>66</sup> F. Meinecke, ‘Staatskunst und Leidenschaft’, *Probleme des Weltkrieges* (Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1917), pp. 59–70, esp. p. 66, on his critique of democracy; W. Herzfeld, *Rosenzweig, “Mitteleuropa” und der Ersten Weltkrieg: Rosenzweigs politische Ideen im zeitgeschichtlichen Kontext* ([*Rosenzweigiana*, Bd. 8] Freiburg: Alba, 2013), p. 130; for a general account, see G. Bénsussan (trans.) M. H. Anderson, ‘Rosenzweig and war: A Question of “Point of View” between creation, revelation and redemption’, *CR: The New Centennial Review* 13/1 (2013), 115–36, esp. 116.

<sup>67</sup> The article under attack was F. Meinecke, ‘Demobilmachung der Geister’ [1917] *Politische Schriften und Reden*, pp. 195–200; cf. F. Rosenzweig, Letter to his parents, 1.10.1917, in *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 459, cited in Herzfeld, *Rosenzweig*, p. 131.

<sup>68</sup> F. Naumann, *Demokratie und Kaiserthum* (Berlin: Schönberg, 1904).

<sup>69</sup> F. Meinecke, ‘Drei Generationen deutscher Gelehrtenpolitik’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 125/2 (1922), pp. 248–83; H. Bruhns, ‘Über die Ökonomie der Historiker und die Historie der Ökonomen: Streiflichter vom Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts’, in F. W. Graf, E. Hanke and B. Picht (eds.) *Geschichte Intellektuell – Theoriegeschichtliche Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), pp. 356–72, esp. p. 359.

conclusions of *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*.<sup>70</sup> However, as Stefan Meineke has clearly shown, Meinecke's interventions were hardly value-free scholarship about the rise of the organic state personality in German political culture, nor were the political writings simply derivative of the claims made in his work on cosmopolitanism. Meinecke had been a liberal monarchist prior to the German Revolution of 1919, and his own political development evolved alongside that of his work. For Meinecke, there is, in fact, a self-controlled and relatively stable evolution in Friedrich Meinecke's work, one whose own evolutionary political moderation remained better balanced during the rhythms of his own wartime development than historians have tended to suggest. Positioning his own politics as coming naturally at the end of the 'zigzag line' that represented German constitutional life since the middle of the nineteenth century, his account of a unique, German democracy relied upon the representational figurehead of its constitutional monarch in order to define itself against the 'enemies' (*Feinde*) who encircled it with their different and personal forms of monarchical rule.<sup>71</sup>

In the epilogue to the third edition of his book on *Cosmopolitanism*, written in the midst of war during spring 1915, Meinecke could still find succour in the fact that newly unified Germany has kept its 'will and strength' in union 'against a world of enemies'.<sup>72</sup> For now, 'power politics' and Prussian hegemony will continue to 'determine the constitutional life of the German Reich', he argues, but the practicalities of war and its harnessing of a multiplicity of German characteristics from across its extent will make it easier 'for the freer social views of the rest of Germany to enter into the Prussian character', but only if some of the 'superfluous features' of the Prussian state, most obviously its suffrage system, are reformed.<sup>73</sup>

Where Pois finds conservative monarchism pre-war, Meinecke's conservative-minded support for the *Zentrumspartei* seems more ambivalent, pivoting around a concern with the reactionary, anti-progressive elements of Catholic religion for German modernisation.<sup>74</sup> His wartime attempts to justify eastward expansion, however, surely also require more explanation than the rather rigid and avowedly 'social scientific'

<sup>70</sup> Pois, *Meinecke and German Politics*, pp. 15, 17.

<sup>71</sup> Meinecke, 'Osterbotschaft', p. 180. Cf. R. vom Bruch, *Weltpolitik als Kulturmission: Auswärtige Kulturpolitik und Bildungsbürgertum in Deutschland am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1982).

<sup>72</sup> Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 375. <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>74</sup> S. Meineke, *Friedrich Meinecke: Persönlichkeit und politisches Denken bis zum Ende der Ersten Weltkriege* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), p. 168.



explanation offered by Meinecke. He claims (in an odd social-psychological booby) that by the age of 25, effectively, political opinions and conventions are fixed, such that Meinecke both simply couldn't have shifted so dramatically in and between the wars of the twentieth century as previous scholarship has routinely suggested. Equally, though, this means that his moderate evolution in line with the times was, somehow, fixed in early manhood and so overturns the 'transformation thesis' that motivates much of the conventional reading of his evolution.<sup>75</sup> When in the third year of war, Meinecke considered the relationship between German militarism and the war aims of the Allies, he could be scathing. French war-aims that seemed entirely antipathetic to rational *Realpolitik*, by investing all their sapped energies into a conflict over Alsace-Lorraine, were mere instances of Machiavellian politics writ large, when what was needed was an ethically grounded form of *Staatsräson*.<sup>76</sup> This would be what he tried to provide in his own book on the subject, one whose principal concerns are, as Stolleis has argued, straightforwardly located in the context of the 1920s, even if this makes the historical claims in his book a problematic source for us today.<sup>77</sup>

The rise of American 'hegemony' through the war and in its wake might specifically have threatened English security, but the sort of vision of a 'united Anglo-Saxon world empire' provided ample incentive for an increasingly unbalanced global political economy, and it caused Meinecke considerable concern.<sup>78</sup> Looking around at those similarly engaged in intellectual labour, he wondered whether or not it might be possible properly to re-appropriate the old German ideal of 'humanity' that had been dethroned in the work of intellectual propaganda, whose work had repurposed German intellectual history as leading necessarily to the overbearing ideals of the overman, of power politics and state egoism.<sup>79</sup> Turning the tables on his intellectual opponents, Meinecke claimed that the Anglo-Saxon approach to war has always been to engage and justify terms as if action was based on godly duty or a humanitarian mission.<sup>80</sup> The *Geisterkampf* of the First World War had been entirely about who was right about this, and German policy, he thought, was designed to construct a unitary German spirit (*Geist*) of freedom, aligning national *Realpolitik* with a realistic commitment to peace, in yet another of

<sup>75</sup> Meinecke, *Meinecke*, p. 295.

<sup>76</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Kriegsziele hüben und drüben' [1917] *Politische Schriften und Reden*, pp. 186–193, at p. 187.

<sup>77</sup> M. Stolleis, 'Friedrich Meineckes Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte und in den neueren Forschung', *Staat und Staatsräson in der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 134–66, at p. 162.

<sup>78</sup> Meinecke, 'Kriegsziele', p. 190. <sup>79</sup> Meinecke, 'Demobilmachung', p. 195.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

his attempts to reconcile two apparently opposing positions into a higher, harmonious union. He wrote that 'only if the insight of the real within the ethical maxim grows together with the sphere of the ideal, can life be fertilised'.<sup>81</sup>

If it sounds like a quasi-Hegelian refrain, that's perhaps unsurprising, but he used it to develop an argument about why such reconciliation was necessary. It was, he suggested, precisely because of the binary categories that divided contemporary German political thought: the authoritarian state (*Obrigkeitsstaat*) as opposed to the democratic state (*Volksstaat*); constitutionalism versus parliamentarism; peculiarly German ideals of the state (*eigenartiges deutsches Staatsideal*) against 'imitations by alien role-models' (*Nachahmung fremder Vorbilder*).<sup>82</sup> This was, of course, part and parcel of his wider reconstruction of 1848 from the perspective of the Great War. Then, there had been 'too little general statesmanship' and too much 'popular will', but if it was a failure, it was also a 'genuine and sincere' failure in its attempt to gain democratic control of a state that was itself not yet a unitary power state, or state personality.<sup>83</sup> During the war, though, when it seemed that German militarism really was the 'shield and protection' of the German nation now unified under a modern state form, the 'combined strength' in unity of the German people was therefore 'succeeding where the men of '48 failed, in taking Germany's fate into our own hand and governing it freely and independently'.<sup>84</sup> He recognised though the peculiar imbalance of his position. If the 'men of '48, intellectually sated, required action', then 'our generation, amid the tumult of the modern universe of labour yearns for the holy calm of contemplation'. The question was how the two sides of action and thought, power and ethics, could once more be reconciled to balance 'at once the surging wave and the heaven-reflecting mirror'.<sup>85</sup> In effect, Meinecke argued that the challenge of the First World War for the German nation is to make good on its initial claim for independent existence, the basic, Machiavellian premise of reason of state. Once that is done, and Germany has 'achieved politics and security in war', he wrote, then 'we shall win new respect for our civilisation also, and then its universal receptivity may become the subtlest and most spiritual means of conquest'.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200: 'Nur wenn die Einsicht in das Reale zur sittlichen Maxime und in die Sphäre des Idealen sich erhebt, kann sie das Leben befruchten'.

<sup>82</sup> F. Meinecke, 'Die Lösung der innern Krisis' [1917] *Politische Schriften und Reden*, pp. 206–12, at p. 207.

<sup>83</sup> F. Meinecke, *The Warfare of a Nation* (trans.) J. A. Spaulding (Worcester MA: Davis Press, 1915), p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17. <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

A greater sense of the power of ideas and culture could hardly be imagined, though his response to the ‘catastrophe’ of defeat and the after-effect of Revolution in Germany in 1919 was to try and understand its origins in the longer-term development of the Prussian ‘aesthetic state’ during the nineteenth century. Effectively offering a précis of his thoughts about the key moments of transition from the earlier ‘catastrophe’ in 1806–07, national reform and liberation in 1813–15, the revolutionary era of 1848–50, through to Prussian-led unification in 1871, Meinecke held to the view that German nationalism was less ‘brutal’ and ‘materialistic’ than that of its enemies.<sup>87</sup> But its socialist critics had not been fully incorporated into the German national project, as its most *Realpolitik* thinkers noted, when claiming that the revolution had in fact come too early in Germany to be successful.<sup>88</sup> For what Bismarck’s model of German unification had offered was by now more than simply a fact of history. It was, as he would consistently reiterate, a fixed component part of German national identity going forward; simply overturning or rejecting it outright was not an option, particularly when what the post-war world most required was a revival of the earlier strains of brotherhood and humanitarian solidarity that signified the ideal of the German *Kulturstaat*, which is the proper perspective to consider when thinking about how to curate certain forms of socialisation in economic relations.<sup>89</sup> His diagnosis was nonetheless gloomy. The Germans could only rely on their spirit and *Kultur*, in a world now dominated by Anglo-Saxon hegemony. So, new sorts of associations and federations that were proclaimed by many as a possible future now needed radical rethinking, because the idealised vision of cosmopolitanism and nationality that had once shaped German political thought had to be revived amid defeat.<sup>90</sup> Its contemporary constitutional façade under Weimar only ‘looks unitarian’, but with revolution and dissent as well as military conflict under the surface, the old ‘particularistic forces’ of German nationalism were ‘beginning to make themselves at home again’.<sup>91</sup>

We should, then, according to Stefan Meinecke, take Meinecke himself more seriously when looking at what he says about his own very ‘slow’ (*langsam*) evolution from a conservative to a democratic party position over thirty years from the middle of the 1890s.<sup>92</sup> He hoped for a politics of reconciliation based on the economic advance of the working classes through processes of capitalist development and the modernisation of

<sup>87</sup> F. Meinecke, *Nach der Revolution* (Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1919), pp. 18, 20–23.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43. <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 68. <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>91</sup> F. Meinecke, ‘The Prusso-German Problem in 1921’, repr. in *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 381.

<sup>92</sup> Meinecke, *Meinecke*, p. 298.

political institutions and structures, buttressed by but not necessarily led through the practical activities of engaged and experienced elites, intellectual as well as political. In this, it might seem, he resembles rather more a figure routinely associated with such a political position, namely Max Weber.<sup>93</sup> For like Weber, up until the end of the Great War, Meinecke's overall political position seems to have remained bourgeois, socially liberal and culturally conservative, rather than having moved in fits and starts. Following this model, the war itself hardly transformed his political judgement, but that judgement itself was grounded in an account of the stable features of the legacies of German history from the Wars of Liberation through the Revolutions of 1848, towards unification and then a normalised vision of *Weltpolitik*. Yet unlike Weber, who famously thought there were only two paths through modern politics, 'Hegel, or our way of doing things', Meinecke's vision remained that of an early nineteenth-century liberal trying to put back together the intellectual construction of Hegel's doctrine of reason of state in the wake of the First World War.<sup>94</sup> The pertinent discussion here comes from his book on the history of the doctrine of reason of state, and particularly the synthesis provided by Hegel, which signals the high-point of a narrative punctuated by the evolutionary advances made by Machiavelli and Frederick the Great previously.

Tracing the evolution of Hegel's discussion of the foundationalism of Machiavelli's *Realpolitik* in his writings on the German constitution, Meinecke proposed two things. First, that Hegel found in Machiavelli a justification for the state as the basic site of politics and interest, whose struggle for existence was the *ultima ratio* of collective life. Second, that he dethroned a purely contextual account of Machiavellian *grandezza*, and rendered it part of a wider theodicy whereby the interest of the state and the interest of its population were reconciled through a historically developmental unfolding of humanitarian reason.<sup>95</sup> The promise of both sides of this account of reason of state working in tandem was precisely the hope embodied in the liberal Revolutions of 1848, wherein the revolutionary movement was part of the cultivation of a new, national 'identity' that could reconcile liberty and the state personality in the figure of the constitutional monarch, while as he elsewhere had noted, the

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>94</sup> Max Weber, letter to Franz Eulenberg, 12 July 1909, in *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe II/6, Briefe 1909–1910*, M. Rainer Lepsius, W. J. Mommsen et al. (eds.) (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994), p. 173.

<sup>95</sup> F. Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and its place in Modern History* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998), pp. 349, 354, 359, 363; *Staatsräson*, pp. 446, 449, 453, 456.

conservative right sought to unify already forms of German unification under Prussian hegemony.<sup>96</sup> But the tragedy in Hegel's elaboration of the ultimate cunning of reason in history was to allow too many of his followers to gloss over and place in a 'palliating light' the basic and ultimately 'bestial' elements of unchecked *Realpolitik*. Once the right of individuality was claimed for the actions of the supra-individual state person, 'it could be used to justify all excesses of power-policy'.<sup>97</sup> Noting Hegel's infatuation with the transformative powers of world-historical individuals like Napoleon, up-scaled Hegelianism could routinely see the promise of liberation in what was in fact the activity of butchery and base power politics.

This was the thought that lay behind one of the major interpretative sources used by Meinecke, namely Hermann Heller's post-war gloss on German politics as *Hegel und der National Machtstaatsgedanke* (1921).<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, it permitted him to end up with an account of German wartime politics, given at the distance of some five years since the Armistice, as a failure of the Hegelian vision to limit the international competition for power between states who were free to do as they saw fit when faced with a struggle for their existence. By not doing so, the optimistic politics of reconciliation through personality 'offered only a flimsy kind of barrier against the excesses of a modern Machiavellism' in the early nineteenth century, but 'which in the future [which is to say during the First World War and its aftermath] would also be capable of justifying itself with some new and special contemporary situation, when it made use of its new and frightful methods which were basically perhaps just as immoral'.<sup>99</sup> If German *Gelehrtenpolitik* could retain this optimistic hope during the First World War and in its immediate aftermath, of course, new histories of the legacy of 1848 for modern German politics, split between realistic and utopian political analysis, would help structure the contours of much academic debate, particularly in the pages of Max Weber's journal, the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. There Meinecke was noticeably something of an absent presence, or more pointedly, deemed broadly to be irrelevant, but in a broader framework, his analysis continued to have force.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>96</sup> F. Meinecke, *Radowitz und die deutsche Revolution* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler, 1913).

<sup>97</sup> Meinecke, *Machiavellism*, p. 369; *Staatsräson*, p. 459.

<sup>98</sup> H. Heller, *Hegel und der Nationalmachtstaatsgedanke in Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zur Politischen Geistesgeschichte* (Leipzig: G. B. Teubner, 1921).

<sup>99</sup> Meinecke, *Machiavellism*, p. 369; *Staatsräson*, p. 460.

<sup>100</sup> For a recent assessment see G. Hübinger, *Engagierte Beobachter der Moderne* (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2016).

#### IV The Second World War and 1848

The Great War had tested Meinecke's liberal vision of both *Gelehrtenpolitik* in general and the changing importance of 1848 in explaining the sclerosis of a German constitutional structure defeated at the last. The incapacity of his Hegelian vision to offer an appropriate salve for the German state against the insidious threat of 'modern Machiavellism' left it free again during the Second World War to be exploited anew by the radical ideology of National Socialism. Meinecke's book on the subject, *The Great Catastrophe*, was published in 1946 and translated by one of the major early twentieth-century historians of the First World War, Sidney Fay, in 1950. Fay had, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, looked to Meinecke's historical account of the impossibilities of Anglo-German union in the era of *Weltpolitik* as background context for his own account of the rise of a broader Anglo-German antagonism.<sup>101</sup> But Meinecke's writing on the German question after the Second World War seemed itself to change tack. It retained a certain nineteenth-century pessimism about the relationship between mass democracy and mass culture derived from Burckhardt, but which considered the moves towards democracy and socialism, nationalism and imperialism, as those which were much the most consequential across the nineteenth century and towards the Great War. What 1848 had set in motion as promise, in fact, was a balance between power and culture, between the individuality of the *Goethezeit* and its figure of the 'Governess Reason', and the *Realpolitik* of the *Bismarckzeit*, that sought to preserve both a 'high culture' and accommodate politics to the 'demands of the new masses'.<sup>102</sup>

By the time he came to rethink the place of Bismarck's commitment to a policy of blood and iron in 1866 from the contemporary perspective of 1946, however, he suggested that the 'staggering course' of two global wars must prompt the serious thought as to whether 'the germs of the later evil were not really implanted in Bismarck's work from the outset', and therefore today 'we listen with more emotion to the voices which at that time expressed concern over the great evils of the future', men like Burckhardt, Constantin Frantz, and Christian Planck. These were the people who noticed the implications of a 'victory of Machiavellism over the principles of morality and justice in international relations'.<sup>103</sup> Their

<sup>101</sup> S. B. Fay, *The Origins of The World War*, 2 vols. [1928/1930] (Boston: Beacon, 1966), vol. I, pp. 136, 139.

<sup>102</sup> F. Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe* [1946] trans. S. B. Fay (Boston: Beacon, 1950), pp. 9, 16.

<sup>103</sup> Meinecke, *German Catastrophe*, p. 13.

foresight suggested the limits of authoritarian socialism, bourgeois nationalism, and imperialism as guiding strategies, even if there were noble attempts to reconcile these elements for progressive purposes in the work and practice of figures like Naumann.<sup>104</sup> The battle for moderation and culture was trumped by pan-Germanism and the Fatherland Party, who were taken as mouthpieces for the extremes that would be further magnified in German politics with the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazis, and which signified the closing of the German mind to the power of democracy as the bridge between the interests of the bourgeoisie and the working class.<sup>105</sup>

Though couched in an immanent and reconstructive critique of modern German history and theory, Meinecke's account was also broader, noting the relationship between reason and imagination that governed the connection between thought and action in practice. It became another saw in his continuous and iterative search for balance and imbalance in the theory and practice of *Ideengeschichte*. The novel stability temporarily achieved by the advance of classical German liberalism was a 'synthesis of power and spirit', between 'rational and irrational forces'. But this search for harmony in civilisation between the rational and irrational took the form of an intellectual threnody in the face of the stark realities of technology, bureaucratic rationality, economic competition, and expansionist visions that came to dominate German politics particularly, and modern politics more generally.<sup>106</sup> That lament configured its explanation amid the contours of general claims and avoided dramatising the singular power of discrete individuals, choosing instead to focus on the balance between chance and general tendencies of historical development through which certain figures, Hitler most obviously, could come to achieve notoriety and power amid moments of opportunity, a scenario that makes the rise to power of a figure like Hitler both structurally explicable and hence potentially replicable, but at the same time tries to render it the outcome of a singular combination of personality and circumstance, and hence a unique aberration.<sup>107</sup> His own conclusion offered a self-diagnosis as well as a historical prediction, beginning with the thought that nearly forty years ago he had dissolved the idea of an opposition between cosmopolitanism and the modern idea of the nation-state, seeing instead the option of their 'mutual enrichment' in German political theory. He ends by saying that 'today, after a generation of the most tremendous revolutions, let us recognise that for Occidental cultural life a similar dialectic is applicable', a Christian Occidental culture was the combined product of general ideas and 'individual and inimitable

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30. <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35. <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56–60, 96.



contributions', such that 'the most universal and the most individualistic can here be married to one another'. The German spirit could, he hoped, find itself once more, and 'fulfil its special and irreplaceable mission within the Occidental community'.<sup>108</sup> Or, put more plainly, there is always hope to be found in history even amid the ruins of defeat, but the German spirit, just like any national spirit, is unique, and therefore uniquely adaptable; 'historical examples of success of failure do not help us very much here. The task each time is a new and individual one'.<sup>109</sup>

## V 1848 and Political Judgement in Retrospect

In a centennial lecture to both memorialise and appraise the legacy of 1848 in modern German history, a form of what he termed a *Sekulärbetrachtung*, Meinecke's harmonising dialectics remained crucial. Nineteenth-century German history had been, he wrote, all about transitioning from the authoritarian nation-state (*Obrigkeitstaat*) to a sociable commonwealth or community, the language of which had been made famous by the Kiel sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, as a form of *Gemeinschaft*. Combining the sociological with the intellectual in a form of reconciliatory dialogue, the sorts of sociability and socialisation (*Vergesellschaftung*) that lay behind *Gemeinschaft* were themselves the very things that had overturned the initial impulse towards authoritarianism. An absolutist-monarchical structure had to be rendered 'elastic' in order for this to happen, a soothing argumentative balm designed to smooth over a clearly anti-democratic constitutional structure.<sup>110</sup> There were three moments in the transition. The Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, the Revolutions of 1848, and the Prussian wars of 1866, signalled the three moments, but only the Revolution of 1848 was truly 'national' even if its symbolic promise of democratic transformation was untimely. With the seemingly easy toppling of Friedrich Wilhelm IV's regime, momentary possibility was quickly brought down by 'the extremists of reaction', which in turn prompted a radicalisation of ideas given most spectacular form in the *Communist Manifesto*, written by those 'extremists of revolution', Marx and Engels. Nevertheless, national democratisation still remained the preeminent task of German politics even from the vantage point of 1948.<sup>111</sup> Meinecke's was a continuous and perpetually revisable story of the possibility and promise of reconciliation between ethics and power, one whose history hinted at the end goal, but which had routinely

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118. <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>110</sup> F. Meinecke, 'The year 1848 in German history', *Review of Politics* 10/4 (1948), pp. 475–492, at p. 475.

<sup>111</sup> Meinecke, '1848 in German history', 477.

been frustrated by political reaction, inappropriately constructed institutions, or untimely ideas. German history and culture could lead the way in realising this potential, but it had been continually blocked as recalcitrant ideas and vengeful politicians spoiled its progress.

Seen from the perspective of another German Revolution in 1933, Meinecke could at least say that 'human depravity' had 'played a comparatively insignificant role' in 1848. But whether or not the German people could be said to be ready or not, this moralism could hardly count as a sober analysis of structural forces and intellectual limitations, reliant as it is upon a disfigured path of development that both nationalises exceptionality, but seeks normal pathways in the comparative historical perspectives of France and Britain, states which are themselves peculiar and hardly standardised.<sup>112</sup> The 'old authoritarian state' failed to meet the pressing needs of the workers in revolt, and 'democracy' even if 'primitive', became the new watchword through which an array of the dispirited, from petit bourgeois to upper middle class, could rally around a critique of what was, to them, another instance of an old and decrepit regime.<sup>113</sup>

The combined struggles of a social and political revolution were necessary, but at the time, not yet timely enough. And as radical journalists and publicists like both Rochau and Marx would suggest, a new and sober measure of realism had to be developed in German political thinking, both to take the measure of the defeat and to signal the developmental trajectory of its path towards unification and democracy. Here the lessons of France in 1830 for Germany in 1848 were twofold. From the perspective of liberalism, events in Frankfurt showed the pathways to modern nationhood by signalling something crucial about the newly urban and liberal social composition of the legislative assemblies. The intellectuals and the middle classes were becoming dominant, but hardly unified.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, republican ideas from French socialism were producing new ideas about political association and confraternity which could align with radical German philosophical critiques of Christian religion and mistaken forms of subjectivity.<sup>115</sup>

Nonetheless, the failures of French communism and German national liberalism remained intertwined, as Bismarck's attempt to generate a united German commonwealth retained too much of the old authoritarianism and hindered the development of democracy throughout the

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 479. <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 484; Meinecke, *German Catastrophe*, p. 79.

<sup>114</sup> Meinecke, '1848 in German history', 487.

<sup>115</sup> G. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), pp. 126, 129, 150, 154, 158.

Wilhelmine Empire.<sup>116</sup> The primacy of foreign policy from Bismarck through *Sammlungspolitik* and *Weltpolitik* alike, precisely the Rankean emphasis in German history that Meinecke had noted during the Great War, was, once again, filtered into another account of the turning point of 1848 and the plausible threat of a European-wide war that was a very real possibility in its aftermath, ranging from Scandinavia to the Crimea in the first instance. Recalling that in the aftermath of two global wars and midway through the twentieth century was little short of 'tragedy'. But the original moment wherein 'the goal of that pure and noble yearning' towards 'national unification within a democratic commonwealth' first began to transform German political theory and practice was 1848. Its iterative consequences for Meinecke's own intellectual history of its impact and his own history, as one among a great many 'tempered by misfortune' over the course of a generation, was quite simply foundational.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Meinecke, '1848 in German history', p. 487.   <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 492.

## 14 The Nationality Problem in the Habsburg Monarchy and the Revolutions of 1848

### A Reassessment

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*Alan Sked*

Previous work on Prince Metternich and his era was usually written by historians of convinced liberal and/or nationalist principles who relied mainly on limited secondary and published primary sources and often simply copied one another. Even conservative historians did little better. Metternich's latest biographer, Wolfram Siemann, lists around thirty such biographies written between 1836 and 2016 which fall into the above category.<sup>1</sup> Siemann's book backs up a number of key monographs on Metternich's diplomacy, which, culminating in a work by Miroslav Šedivý, undermine the negative judgements on the man and his era by scholars such as Schroeder and Schulz.<sup>2</sup> One day perhaps, Metternich will be seen as the greatest statesman of the nineteenth century, greater even than Bismarck. Both men used force to overthrow the previous European order; both were conservatives in domestic policy; both created a system of alliances; both saw a revengeful France as the main enemy which had to be contained; and both warned against revolution. Yet Metternich did not rely on the army to the same extent; his alliance system was less complex and gave rise to fewer tensions; under him there was no fear of domination of the Continent from Vienna as there would be later from Berlin under Bismarck; and arguably his domestic system was less oppressive. Certainly, he retained power longer than Bismarck.

<sup>1</sup> W. Siemann, *Metternich, Stratege und Visionär. Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2016), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> See R. D. Billinger Jr., *Metternich and the German Question. States' Rights and Federal Duties, 1820–1834* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware, 1991); E. E. Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); A. J. Reinermann, *Austria and the Papacy in the Age of Metternich*, 2 vols. (Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 1979–1989); M. Šedivý, *Metternich, the Great Powers and the Eastern Question* (Pilsen: University of West Bohemia, 2013); P. W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1783–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); and M. Schulz, *Normen und Praxis. Das Europäische Konzert der Großmächte als Sicherheitsrat, 1815–1860* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007).

What caused the Revolutions of 1848 in the Habsburg Monarchy? Metternich's own explanation for all of Europe's revolutionary upheavals between 1815 and 1851 was that a revolutionary conspiracy was to blame:

For many years all those who pointed to the existence of a *comité directeur* working secretly for universal revolution were met everywhere only by incredulity; today [1833], it has been shown that this infernal propaganda exists, that it has its centre in Paris and that it is divided into as many sections as there are nations to regenerate ... Everything that refers to this great and dangerous plot cannot, therefore, be observed and surveyed with too much attention.<sup>3</sup>

Mazzini's plans for Young Europe were now being used to confirm the chancellor's worst suspicions that Europe's nationalist revolutionaries were secretly co-operating to undermine the Habsburgs. Metternich's reasoning perhaps was not as irrational as it at first appears, since he truly believed that the Monarchy was doing well under his leadership, a judgement now endorsed by recent historians – it seemed evident to him that only revolutionary terrorists could oppose Habsburg rule – hence his later, (in)famous quip to Guizot on the stairs of the British Museum in 1848, that it had never occurred to him that he had been wrong.

Historians, of course, have almost always held him to have been wrong and have, rightly, written off his conspiracy theory, although the causes of the 1848 Revolutions have never really been satisfactorily explained.<sup>4</sup> For a long time an apparently more sophisticated theory was employed to explain the outbreak of revolutions: the Marxist one of the 'rise of the bourgeoisie', a social phenomenon that, supposedly, had led first to the great French Revolution of 1789 and later to those of 1820, 1830, and 1848. But since the 1960s, the pattern of interpretation on which so much of the historical analysis of 1848 has, consciously or unconsciously, been based, has been destroyed.<sup>5</sup> The last surrender of the Marxist viewpoint may be said to have emanated from the pen of Eric Hobsbawm himself, when he conceded in 1990:

many of the 'revisionist' criticisms of the orthodox [Marxist] interpretation are both factually and conceptually legitimate. There was not, in 1789, a self-conscious bourgeois class representing the new realities of economic power ... insofar as

<sup>3</sup> F. A. Gualterio, *Gli Ultimi Rivolgimenti Italiani. Memorie Storiche con Documenti Inediti*, 4 vols. (Florence: Filippo Antonio, 1852), vol. II, pp. 286–87. Gualterio reprints Metternich's correspondence with his agents in Milan.

<sup>4</sup> For an examination of the causes, see A. Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815–1918* (Basingstoke: Longman, 2001), ch. 2.

<sup>5</sup> For the role of François Furet in deconstructing the traditionalist French Marxist version of the French Revolution, see M. S. Christofferson, 'An anti-totalitarian history of the French Revolution: François Furet's *Penser la Révolution Française* in the intellectual politics of the late 1970s', *French Historical Studies*, 22/4 (1999), 557–611.

there was in the 1780s, a social revolution was not its object, but rather a reform of the institutions of the kingdom; and in any case its conscious objective was not the construction of an industrial capitalist economy. Nor was this the result of the revolution, which almost certainly had a negative effect on the French economy.<sup>6</sup>

The same kind of revisionism has also destroyed the 'bourgeois revolution' interpretation of the Revolutions between 1815 and 1848. Cobban and Pinkney, not to mention Tudesq and Daumard, put paid some time ago to the idea that the 1830 Revolution in France represented the overthrow of a restored feudal order by the bourgeoisie.<sup>7</sup>

Other studies have shown how 1832 in no way constituted a political landmark in the rise to power of the bourgeoisie in England. Similarly, research into German history pointed to the use of 'service nobility' (not to mention fear of revolution) to absorb the political ambitions of the German bourgeoisie,<sup>8</sup> while different parts of the Habsburg Monarchy also produced conclusions regarding the role of class and nationality which undermine the crude, old-fashioned accounts of 1848. In particular, the political situation in *Vormärz* Hungary resisted any simple pattern based on the rise of the bourgeoisie, as even official communist Hungarian historiography conceded:

It is one of the anomalies of Hungarian social development that the change to bourgeois conditions depended little on the class which should have been responsible . . . when the time came for the actual change to bourgeois conditions, there was no bourgeoisie force capable of carrying out the task. The bourgeoisie of the royal towns in fact fought on the side of the court defending feudalism against national independence as represented by the feudal nobility.<sup>9</sup>

The debate on the bourgeoisie was productive insofar as it led on to a search for alternative sources of nationalist discontent in the Metternich period. And this is important, since only by examining these can we hope to understand what happened during 1848–49.

The end result is rather astonishing. It is now clear that the Metternich era was a sort of golden age for the nationalities in cultural terms, a period

<sup>6</sup> E. Hobsbawm, 'The making of a "Bourgeois Revolution"' in F. Fehér (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Making of Modernity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1990), pp. 30–48.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Cobban, 'The middle class in France, 1815–1848' in *France Since the Revolution* (London: Cape, 1970); D. H. Pinkney, 'The myth of the French Revolution of 1830' in D. H. Pinkney and T. Ropp (eds.), *A Festschrift for Frederick B. Artz*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1974); A.-J. Tudesq, *Les Grands Notables en France (1840–49): Étude Historique d'une Psychologie Sociale*, 2 vols. (Paris: PUF, 1964); and A. Daumard, *La Bourgeoisie Parisienne de 1815 à 1848* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1963).

<sup>8</sup> See J. Snell, *The Democratic Movement in Germany, 1789–1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1976), p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> See I. Barta in *A History of Hungary*, E. Pamlény (ed.) (London: Collet's, 1975), p. 239.

in which the Habsburg government did everything possible to encourage the development of national histories, grammars, dictionaries, and cultural institutions; the collection of national folksongs, poetry, romances, and sagas; the perfection of orthographies; and even the establishment of national newspapers.<sup>10</sup> In my own work, *Metternich and Austria. An Evaluation*, I argued that: 'Metternich was the most important and successful diplomat of his time and while he was in office after 1815 the Habsburg Monarchy experienced three decades of peace, prosperity, stability, cultural renewal and economic transformation.'<sup>11</sup>

Traditionally, of course, Metternich has been seen as a tyrant who ran a sort of Ruritanian backwater, where the majority of the population, the peasantry, lived in misery and where various 'nationalities' were not merely suppressed but actively played off against one another. All this, of course, is untrue. David Laven wrote with regard to Italy:<sup>12</sup> 'the "black legend" of oppressive Austrian rule was the invention of patriotic propagandists who paid scant attention to reality.' Denis Mack Smith echoed this in 1971.<sup>13</sup> Robert Evans said the same with regard to the nationalities in Hungary in 1987:

It is frequently asserted that the Habsburgs indulged a tactic of divide and rule over the nationality frictions in Hungary before 1848 . . . there is very little real sign of it. Metternich and his colleagues engaged in a brief flirtation with the Croats, returned a dusty answer to the Slovaks, ignored the Romanians, alienated many local Germans.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, the age of Metternich saw no attempt to oppress the nationalities or to play them off against one another.

It is also a myth that the dynasty used the army to divide and rule. The allegation that Czech troops were quartered on the Hungarians, Hungarian troops on the Austrians, Austrian troops on the Poles, Polish troops on the Italians, and Italian troops on the Croats, a policy attributed without any sources to Francis I, is simply a historical fiction. Yet it was put about at the time and later and still persists among non-specialists. Here is the US *chargé d'affaires* in Vienna writing in his memoirs:

<sup>10</sup> See ch. 6 of Sked, *Metternich*, also, H. Rumpler, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa: Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna: Überreuter, 1997), pp. 155–59 and A. Moritsch (ed.), *Der Austroslavismus: ein verfrühtes Konzept zur politischen Neugestaltung Mitteleuropas* (Vienna: Bohlau, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Sked, *Metternich*, p. 246.

<sup>12</sup> D. Laven, 'The age of restoration' in J. A. Davis (ed.), *Italy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 51–73.

<sup>13</sup> D.M. Mack Smith, *Victor Emanuel, Cavour and the Risorgimento* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 7–9.

<sup>14</sup> R.J.W. Evans, 'The Habsburgs and the Hungarian problem, 1790–1848' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 39 (1989), 42–62.



no troops were permitted to remain at home, or in those provinces where they were enlisted and belonged, but inevitably transferred to another and more distant nation, where they could not speak the language, had no sympathy with the people, and where they were ready, at any moment, to shoot them down with as little compunction as they would a foreign enemy whom they had never before seen. Bohemians, for instance, were quartered upon the Hungarians; Hungarians upon the Austrians; Austrians upon the Poles, Poles upon the Italians; Italians upon the Croatians, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Then there is the supposedly damning quote from Francis I, attributed to him by the Hungarian Oscar Jászi:

My peoples are strange to each other and that is all right . . . I send the Hungarians into Italy and the Italians into Hungary. Every people watches its neighbour. The one does not understand the other . . . From their antipathy will be born order and from mutual hatred, general peace.<sup>16</sup>

Nothing was further from the truth. The largest contingent of troops in Radetzky's army in Italy in 1848 was Italians – 39 per cent of the infantry and 33 per cent of the cavalry; the largest contingent in Hungary was the Hungarians – 68 per cent of the infantry and 43 per cent of the army as a whole.<sup>17</sup> Radetzky was very level-headed about his Italian troops. He wrote to the president of the *Hofkriegsrat*, Count Hardegg, from Milan:

I ask you to consider that a great part of my troops consists of Italian regiments; I do not mistrust these troops in the least; they will do their duty; but we must not expect more of them than is reasonable, particularly when they are being led into battle against their own compatriots. There can be no doubt that these troops will be subject to all kinds of influences and will be enticed to desert; if the luck of battle goes against us in the first battle, then I shall not answer for their loyalty; such an experience would not even be surprising; it is as old as history itself.<sup>18</sup>

And as things turned out, the luck of battle did indeed at first go against him and thousands of his Italian troops did desert. In fact, out of roughly 30,000, about 10,000 deserted, 12,000 were cut off and 10,000 remained loyal, although they could not be trusted and now posed problems. On 4 April 1848 he confided in the war minister:

They consist of 10 Battalions. But where are they to be deployed? In the first line? There, they could cross over, use their weapons against us and form a gap in the line of battle which would have to be dangerous. In reserve they threaten my rear;

<sup>15</sup> W. H. Stiles, *Austria in 1848–49*, 2 vols. (Harpers, 1852), vol. I, p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> O. Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> A. Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire. Radetzky, the Imperial Army and Class War, 1848* (London: Longman, 1979), p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, 'Radetzky to Hardegg', 12 December 1847, KA.CA (Präs) 1847.

to keep them in the fortresses would be even more dangerous since they could then deliver them to the enemy. The only thing left is to divide them up in such a way that only partial and gradual defections can result; in the worst circumstances I would disarm and dissolve them.<sup>19</sup>

The tone was still level-headed and Radetzky's policies towards Italian deserters would become notoriously mild.<sup>20</sup> Yet his attitude was one that was common in the Austrian army, again refuting the kind of policy towards the nationalities that Jászi invented. Here is the former governor of Lombardy, Count Hartig's memory of the situation regarding the Italian troops as late as 1848:

But almost up to the very commencement of the revolution their loyalty had not only not been doubted but every allusion to such doubts – which are said not to have been wanting in the cabinet was looked upon as a violation of military honour. This prejudice was so extensively prevalent that even in the month of February when martial law against high treason and rebellion was proclaimed in the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom and the high military was made subject to it, this latter circumstance was even in the highest circles of Vienna looked upon with displeasure as an attack upon the honour of the soldier, although the Field Marshal himself had consented to the measure.<sup>21</sup>

Part of the reason for Austrian complacency about the nationalities was simply the fact that the Monarchy was prospering in the first half of the nineteenth century and that there were very few uprisings or political tumults compared with events in Western Europe.<sup>22</sup> One French contemporary historian recorded:<sup>23</sup> 'Austria is in a remarkable state of prosperity ... we may everywhere observe signs of very forward civilisation, commerce, industry, railroads ...' The US consul-general was equally effusive in his memoirs of 1848.<sup>24</sup> Writing of Austria and the other absolutist states of Europe, he wrote:

They constructed roads and canals, encouraged agriculture and manufactures, and reformed the laws of trade, abolished local and subordinate oppressions, endowed seminaries of education, inculcated a reverence for religion, and patronised academies of art.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, 'Radetzky to War Minister Zanini', 4 April 1848, KA.MK (1848), No. 302.

<sup>20</sup> A. Sked, *Radetzky. Imperial Victor and Military Genius* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), ch. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Count Hartig, 'Genesis or details of the late Austrian Revolution by an officer of state', translated as vol. 4 or *Continuation* of Archdeacon Coxe's *History of the House of Austria* (London, 1853), p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> See Sked, *Decline and Fall* and *Metternich*.

<sup>23</sup> M. Capfigue, *The Diplomats of Europe* (London: G.W. Nickisson, 1845), pp. 56–7.

<sup>24</sup> Stiles, *Austria*, vol. I, p. 47. <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Noble landlords outside Hungary paid taxes; peasants could sue their landlords, even the emperor himself, in court and were given free legal aid if necessary; there was a widespread system of student grants; retired public servants, civil and military, received pensions, as did their widows; and there was an extensive amount of organised charity. The *robot* or forced labour service might exist in parts of the Monarchy, but it was often undertaken inefficiently or not at all in the expectation that it was soon to be abolished.<sup>26</sup> In spite of all this, John McGregor MP, a leading English free-trader, wrote in 1843 that:<sup>27</sup> ‘the public securities of Austria are as safe as any in the world’. Finally, in 1838, the South German newspaper the *Augsburger Allgemeine* wrote:

one of the most fortunate fundamental ideas of the Austrian state which has long served as a principle is complete respect for nationality, which forms an integrating force in the Monarch. This generous and liberal outlook has solved a difficult task, that of forming the heterogeneous parts into a whole, one which other states, with their systems of centralisation could not accomplish. The government allows Germans to be German, Bohemians (i.e. Czechs) to be Bohemian, Italians to be Italian.<sup>28</sup>

The Monarchy’s Slavs, in particular, appreciated this. The Metternich era was not only a golden age for them culturally; the period, as already noted, was also one in which the doctrine of Austro-Slavism was founded, the idea that since the Monarchy’s population was predominately Slav, it might one day be transformed into a Slav state. The alternative was not for Slavs to form separate national states, but to be taken over by the Russians or the Germans. To quote A. J. P. Taylor: ‘the Habsburg Monarchy was a way out of being Russian or German in Central Europe’.<sup>29</sup> Or, quoting Palačky in 1848, when the Czechs rejected membership of the German Assembly at Frankfurt: ‘if Austria did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it in the interest of Europe, nay of humanity itself.’<sup>30</sup> In the words of the Austrian historian, Andreas Moritsch:

There was a series of reasons why the Habsburg Slavs saw in the Danubian Monarchy if not the best possible state, still the one that best corresponded to

<sup>26</sup> See footnote 25.

<sup>27</sup> J. McGregor, *Commercial Statistics*, 5 vols. (London, 1843–50), vol. I, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> 12 December 1838.

<sup>29</sup> See A.J.P. Taylor, ‘The failure of the Habsburg Monarchy’ in *Europe, Grandeur and Decline* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp. 127–32. However: ‘In the last resort the Habsburg Monarchy was not a device for enabling a number of nationalities to live together’ (p.132). It was to provide, rather, a power base for Habsburg dynastic ambitions.

<sup>30</sup> See the cover of Moritsch, *Austroslavismus*.

their political, social, and cultural situation . . . The Habsburg Monarchy was not that notorious ‘prison of the peoples’ (*Völkerkerker*) that nationalist historians made of it; it was much more the breeding ground (*Brutstätte*) of nations.<sup>31</sup>

The only real peasant revolt in Austria during the Metternich period came in 1846 when the Polish (NOT Ruthenian) peasants of Western Galicia slaughtered their Polish nationalist landlords in the name of their emperor. These peasants denied being Poles and when questioned on the subject replied: ‘we are not Poles, we are imperial Austrians,’ adding that Poles were ‘the lords, the administrators, the writers, the educated; we, however, are peasants, imperial peasants’.<sup>32</sup> At the time, there were grave fears that Polish troops from locally recruited regiments might go over to the rebels, but this did not happen. Prince Felix of Schwarzenberg was emphatic about that in his reports to Metternich: ‘not a single common soldier went over to the enemy’. All the Polish troops had supported the government and all the troops from reserve battalions and those on leave from regular regiments returned to their colours. They all displayed open opposition to the ‘national movement’, which, albeit a puzzle to some outsiders, was totally explicable to those ‘acquainted with Austrian conditions’.<sup>33</sup> It was the local Polish gentry whom Schwarzenberg blamed for attempting to overthrow Austrian rule.<sup>34</sup> His views would be crucial in determining Austrian policy regarding the nationalities in 1848–49.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> See A. Sked, ‘Austria and the “Galician Massacres” of 1846. Schwarzenberg and the propaganda war. An unknown but key episode in the career of the Austrian statesman’ in L. Höbelt and T. G. Otte (eds.), *A Living Anachronism?: European Diplomacy and the Habsburg Monarchy: Festschrift für Francis Roy Bridge zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vienna: Bohlau, 2010), pp. 56–118, p. 70.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>34</sup> There had also been a massacre of nobles in Upper Hungary in 1831 during a cholera epidemic, when they were accused of planning to poison water supplies. This came at a time of raised political tension with the Polish revolt against the Russians and the war in Congress (Russian) Poland in 1830–31. See G. Seide, *Regierungspolitik und öffentliche Meinung im Kaisertum Österreich anlässlich der polnischen Novemberrevolution (1830–31)* (Wiesbaden: Osteuropa-Institut München, 1971) and L. Tilkovszky, *Az 1831-évi parasztfelkelés* (Budapest: Müvelt Nép, 1955). However, there was no political revolution inside the Monarchy despite the resentment of the Hungarian nobility against Metternich’s support for Russia.

<sup>35</sup> See A. Sked, ‘Benedek and Breinl and the “Galician Horrors” of 1846’ in L. Péter and M. Rady (eds.), *Resistance, Rebellion and Revolution in Central Europe: Commemorating 1956* (Studies in Russia and Eastern Europe no. 3, 2008), pp. 87–98, and “Galician Massacres”. Eric Hobsbawm called the events in Galicia in 1846 ‘the greatest peasant jacquerie since the days of the French Revolution of 1789’ but failed to mention that the peasants had supported the Habsburgs! See E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London: Abacus, 1977), p. 155.

Metternich was absolutely delighted to hear from Schwarzenberg that the masses had supported their emperor rather than the revolutionaries. He spread the word throughout the empire, telling the Hungarian magnate Count Apponyi, then ambassador to Paris:

the upper classes in Galicia were devoted to the cause of revolution; it is the people who have done justice to the conspirators . . . The example of the justice meted out by the latter to its seducers could easily turn against the upper classes in Hungary; I have nothing to teach you in this respect and you know as well as I do what an effect would be produced in the country if the King appeared to be appealing to the people.<sup>36</sup>

To Radetzky in Italy he went even further, proclaiming:<sup>37</sup> 'A new era, therefore, has dawned whose influence will not be limited to our monarchy. The democrats have mistaken their base; a democracy without the people is a chimera.' By 1848, Schwarzenberg would be Radetzky's chief diplomatic advisor in Italy, while Colonel Benedek, who had put down the rebels in Galicia in 1846 in the midst of the massacres, would be one of Radetzky's top commanders.

The 'Galician horrors' were vitally significant. By the outbreak of revolution, the governing classes were convinced that their true enemies among the nationalities were neither the bourgeoisie, the workers, nor the peasants, but the local nobilities of the various parts of the Monarchy, who were demanding a greater role in government. Their wealth had been improving for decades but in the economic crisis after 1846, coinciding with the rise of Italian and Hungarian nationalism, they had become more restless. In short, the provincial estates, like the French *Parlements* in 1787, were starting to claim the right to participate in imperial policy making. And it was these claims, according to Habsburg ruling circles, which led to the outbreak of revolution.

The more one examines the sources, the more one is struck by the near unanimity of this view among the ruling class. The army high command in Galicia explained to its troops in a *Leitfaden* written at the end of March 1848 that revolution had erupted in Austria when a delegation in Vienna (presumably the one from the Lower Austrian estates) had been fired on while petitioning the emperor to issue a form of *Ständeverfassung* (a constitution based on estates).<sup>38</sup> It continued: 'the

<sup>36</sup> R. Metternich and E. von Klinkowström (eds.), *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren*, 8 vols. (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1880–1884), vol. VIII, p. 182, doc. 1543.

<sup>37</sup> Vienna, *Haus-Hof-und Staatsarchiv*, 'Metternich to Radetzky', 16 March 1846, *Staatskanzleiakten, Provinzen, Lombardo-Venezien*, K.38. (Henceforth HHSA).

<sup>38</sup> Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv, Centrankanzleiakten, Präsidialreihe* (1848), no. 150, FML Hammerstein to *Hofkriegsrathpraesidium*, Lemberg, 28 March 1848. (Henceforth KA. CK. P.)

Emperor can look after his lands much better and more quickly if a certain number of intelligent men are chosen to voice the wishes and requests of a country in a Diet, as in the case of Hungary'.<sup>39</sup> This represented not merely an acceptance of the need for a new constitutional structure for the Monarchy but an explanation of the causes of the revolution based on the grievances of local diets. Count Hartig, one of Metternich's closest colleagues in the period before 1848 and a key member of the Council of State, wrote in his memoirs that while 'commotions' took place in Italy and Hungary 'with the object of effecting separation, the other parts of the empire were not quiet. In these latter, however, the object in view was only the extension or recovery of old privileges, an increase of influence over the provincial administration, combined with a diminished degree of dependence upon the court offices of Vienna and the resuscitation of their nationality'.<sup>40</sup> He continued:

The greater or less importance of the insurrection against the government was in proportion to the weight which was possessed by these provincial estates or by the aristocracy, who always considered themselves bound to throw down the gauntlet to the so-termed bureaucracy arising partly from the extent of the privileges they possessed and partly from their connection with members of the central government.<sup>41</sup>

Metternich also stated that it was the nobles of the Habsburg Monarchy who precipitated revolution in 1848: 'To the symptoms of a sick, degenerate age belongs the completely false position which the nobility all too often adopts. It was they nearly everywhere who lent a hand to the confusion that was being prepared'.<sup>42</sup>

How accurate was their viewpoint? Hans Schlitter's investigation of Vienna's relations with the estates of Hungary, Bohemia, Lower Austria, and Galicia in the 1840s, *Aus Österreichs Vormärz*,<sup>43</sup> remains the only study based on the records of the Council of State and the Ministerial Conference, illustrating in great detail how wearisome the estates had become before the outbreak of revolution. Greenfield's study showed that opposition to Austria was spearheaded by the nobility,<sup>44</sup> an interpretation since confirmed by more recent research.<sup>45</sup> As Romeo states in his introduction:

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>40</sup> Hartig, *Genesis*, p. 69. <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup> Metternich and von Klinkowström, *Aus Metternichs*, vol. VIII, p. 548.

<sup>43</sup> Zurich: Amalthea-Verlag, 1920.

<sup>44</sup> K. R. Greenfield, *Economics and Liberalism in the Risorgimento. A Study of Nationalism in Lombardy, 1818–48* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978 [1965]).

<sup>45</sup> The story is really one of initial co-operation with Austria by the aristocratic elites in Lombardy-Venetia after 1815 followed by a growing alienation especially by the younger generation after 1830. See D. Laven, *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs, 1815–1835*

It would be natural to infer that Italian liberalism reflected a movement by the middle class to gain control of society. The defect of this thesis is that the programme was initiated, expounded and propagated, not by an aspiring and self-conscious bourgeoisie, with strong intellectual interests to serve, but by landed proprietors and groups of intellectuals many of whose leaders were of the aristocracy.<sup>46</sup>

In Lombardy-Venetia, the local nobility had long complained that it lacked prestige. In January 1848 the Count of Castelbarco told Metternich's envoy to Milan, Count Ficquelmont, that the nobility in Lombardy-Venetia had been 'left without rights, without privileges of any kind'.<sup>47</sup> Another noble, di Capitani, told Metternich: 'It would be no bad thing to increase the number of nobles in Lombardy. The ancient families have died out ... Grants of nobility will win over the influential families.'<sup>48</sup> Even more than that, they should not be expected to study or work to hold state office:

The possibility given to Italians of occupying middling and lower posts which demand much more work, profound study and long practice and bring a minimum reward and very little influence cannot win the interest of the patrician families and the wealthy of the Kingdom. It is a short step, moreover, from being excluded from service to the state and joining the opposition.<sup>49</sup>

Very relevant, too, was the fact that many of these noble families held land in neighbouring Piedmont-Sardinia and held dual nationality (i.e. they were *sudditi misti*) and so could take up positions in Piedmontese service.<sup>50</sup> The mayor of Milan, Count Casati, sent his sons to the Sardinian Military Academy, not the Austrian one.<sup>51</sup> By 1848 even the vice-regal court was being boycotted by the local nobles.<sup>52</sup>

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); M. Meriggi, *Amministrazione e Classi Sociali nel Lombardo-Venetao (1815-1848)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983), and E. Tonnetti, *Governo austriaco e notabili sudditi: Congregazioni e Municipi nel Veneto del Restaurazione* (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1997); Sked, *Survival of the Habsburg Empire*, part III.

<sup>46</sup> Greenfield, *Economics and Liberalism*, pp. vii and xii.

<sup>47</sup> 'Ficquelmont to Metternich', Milan, 31 January 1848, H-HSA, PL-V, K23.

<sup>48</sup> F. Arese, 'La Lombardia e la politica dell'Austria: un colloquio inedito del Metternich nel 1832, *Archivio Storico Lombardo* (Casa del Manzoni, 1950), pp. 5-57, 24.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> See K. von Schönhals, *Erinnerungen eines österreichischen Veteranen aus dem italienischen Kriege der Jahr 1848 und 1849* (Stuttgart and Tübingen: J.G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1853), p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> For Austrian disparagement, see J. Alexander, F. von Helfert, 'Casati und Pillersdorf und die Anfänge der italienischen Einheitsbewegung', *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, 91 (1902), 147 and 468.

<sup>52</sup> Countess Ficquelmont complained that she had to live 'in total isolation from the Milanese'. See Comte F. de Sonis (ed.), *Lettres du Comte et de la Comtesse de Ficquelmont à la Comtesse Tiesenhausen* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1911), p. 143.



The fact was, however, that the Austrians saw the Lombard-Venetian aristocracy as second rate and it was significant that soon after she took possession of Lombardy-Venetia, Austria instituted heraldic commissions to examine the titles of all nobles in the kingdom, abolishing many ranks of nobility altogether and relegating the equivalence of other ranks compared to German titles.<sup>53</sup> They also regarded Italian nobles as undeserving of promotion or special treatment. In the words of Radetzky's adjutant, General Schönhals:

But he who knows the disinclination, particularly of the Italian upper classes against everything which constitutes state service, he who knows how little inclination they possess for serious study, will understand that Austria could not seek her governors, supreme judges or generals among the Italian nobility. Look through the matriculations of the universities of Pavia and Padua and see if one meets with a distinguished name there. The theatre and the cafes are not the places where statesmen are produced and tiresome working up the ladder of service posts is not to the taste of rich Italians. We do not blame them for this. But at the same time they cannot accuse the state of violating nationality, of partiality and of neglect.<sup>54</sup>

The whole army in Italy had nothing but contempt for the local nobles, one colonel writing: 'the wanton, rich *dolce far niente* living *Sciiori* (*Signori*) are the ones that should be trodden on, the highest nobility most of all'. Metternich himself lost patience with them by 1848, writing to Ficquelmont:

What do the Lombard nobility want? Do they intend to renounce their moral and material existence? How can they do so? Yet their conduct must make one assume this. The driving force behind the unspeakable position of the country is coming without a shadow of a doubt from their side. Do they want to surrender their fortunes on the high altar of some incredible divinity and bring on the holocaust? Do they intend to support the party which today can only triumph at the cost of their life and prosperity?<sup>55</sup>

He had already referred to them as 'the most gangrenous class of the population . . . this bastard race of a fallen aristocracy'.<sup>56</sup> More ominously, by January 1848, the *Augsburger Allgemeine* published the following article:

People in Italy are making the same remarks as were made in Galicia. The masses in Italy, as in Galicia, are not interested . . . in (political) movements and if the

<sup>53</sup> B. Waldstrum-Wartenberg, 'Österreichische Adelsrecht, 1804–1918', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchiv*, 17/18 (1964–65), 117–24, and 140–42.

<sup>54</sup> Schönhals, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 23–24.

<sup>55</sup> 'Metternich to Ficquelmont', 23 January 1848, H-H SA, SPL-V, K. 23.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Metternich to Ficquelmont', 8 January 1848.

Lombards are forced to pay the cost of their revolution, it will not be the farm labourers who will suffer as a class; the repayment shall be made by the landowners and the rich and since they alone are guilty, they should pay the price.<sup>57</sup>

On 2 February 1848, it continued:

But what will happen should the light infiltrate the inner regions of the people and if the people should discern the reason for its dissipation? Ought the government to be blamed if . . . the horrid scenes of Galicia have to be re-enacted upon the fertile fields of Lombardy?<sup>58</sup>

The Hungarian nobles, too, were aware of the Austrian belief that the peasants would support the Austrians if they revolted. Indeed, in 1834, the emperor's representative in Transylvania, the Archduke Ferdinand d'Este, had toyed with the idea of stirring up the local peasantry against their Magyar landlords.<sup>59</sup> However, Magyar landlords in Hungary were also well aware of such schemes, which Miklós Wesselényi referred to in his speech at Szátmar before his arrest and trial.<sup>60</sup> The Hungarian historian Erzsébet Andics wrote: 'we repeatedly find in the confidential correspondence of this time the reference that it might be necessary to keep the liberal Hungarian nobility in check by the spectre of a peasant uprising stirred up from above'.<sup>61</sup> Metternich told the Archduke Palatine 'that only the fear of the monarch taking such an appalling step [was] holding back the Hungarian liberal nobility from revolution'.<sup>62</sup> He told the tsar:

When the passive opposition has to make way for acts of force, on that day – it can be taken for granted – the powerful majority of the people whom the Hungarian liberals regard as nothing more than a *misera plebs* will offer their support to the king. Indeed, this can be reckoned on since this whole class is absolutely embittered against its landlords.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, Ficquelmont, as ambassador to St Petersburg in 1837, told the tsar: 'It would need only a word from the court to wipe out this opposition by making the peasants think of an improvement to their lot, something the nobles have no wish to grant them'.<sup>64</sup>

There seems good reason to believe that the imperialist analysis of the origins of the 1848 Revolutions was correct. But how did it affect Austrian

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in N. Bianchi Giovini, *L'Autriche en Italie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1854), vol. II, p.21.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in F. Della Peruta, 'I contadini nella rivoluzione lombarda del 1848' in *Movimento Operaio* (1953), pp. 525–75.

<sup>59</sup> E. Andics, 'Metternich és az 1830-as évek Magyar reformmozgalma', *Századok* (1972), 272–309, at 303. The article was subsequently included in her book, *Metternich und die Frage Ungarns* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304. <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 303–4. <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304. <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

policy? At first it allowed the Monarchy to take a reasonably indulgent line towards the revolutions. However, there would be two stumbling points: first, with the intervention of Piedmont-Sardinia, the dispute in Italy became one of foreign rather than domestic policy; and in this context, given Hungary's almost open support of the Italians, once she had secured her own *de facto* independence from Vienna during the Italian war, armed confrontation became almost unavoidable with the Magyars.<sup>65</sup> Secondly, the split between the Magyars and the Croats meant that the latter wanted to run their own affairs and supported Vienna, while the betrayal of the Magyars and the behaviour of the Viennese radicals in October 1848 in staging an uprising in support of Hungary led two key leaders, Radetzky and Schwarzenberg, to abandon the faith they undoubtedly still held until then in representative institutions. In Lombardy-Venetia, contempt for the local nobility eventually led Radetzky and his army to carry out a class war by implementing plans to boost the peasantry in an attempt to divide and rule in Northern Italy.

According to his chief of staff, General Hess, the rationale was: 'The people love us, the nobles, the rich landowners hate us; we must, therefore, annihilate them.'<sup>66</sup> Radetzky himself told Schwarzenberg: 'To humble the refractory rich, to protect the loyal citizen, but *in particular to exalt the poorer classes of the peasantry as in Galicia* should be the principle on which from now on the government in Lombardy-Venetia should be based.'<sup>67</sup> Hence once he had defeated Charles Albert and reoccupied Milan, the Northern Italian nobility was taxed and taxed again in an effort to destroy its economic base. Radetzky levied special taxes, super taxes, and extraordinary taxes to force its members to pay the cost of the war and his own administration. He even tried to confiscate all noble lands as early as November 1848, although it was not until the Milan uprising of February 1853 that sequestration decrees were eventually put into effect.<sup>68</sup>

But no class war was even contemplated elsewhere. Nowhere else did a military commander have a civil administration to run and pay for while war was going on elsewhere and being threatened again against himself. Hence the nationality problem from the viewpoint of the ruling classes

<sup>65</sup> For the story of Hungary's diplomatic alienation from Austria in the spring and summer of 1848–49, see I. Hajnal, *A Batthyány-Kormány Külpolitikája* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1957).

<sup>66</sup> N. Bianchi Giovini, *L'Austria in Italia*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1854), vol. II, p. 102.

<sup>67</sup> A. Filipuzzi, *Le Relazioni Diplomatiche fra l'Austria e il Regno Sardegna e la Guerra del 1848–49*, 2 vols., 53 and 54 in the series *Fonti per la Storia d'Italia* Rome, 1961, vol. 2, pp. 34–35, 'Radetzky to Schwarzenberg', Milan, 13 April 1849.

<sup>68</sup> Sked, *Survival of the Habsburg Empire*, Part III.

became highly complex. While true reactionaries like Field Marshal Prince Windischgrätz would have been willing to negotiate with the leading Magyar nobles over Hungary, leaving them a key role in government there, and reserving a special role for the aristocracy in other parts of the Monarchy, this was ruled out by Schwarzenberg, who condemned the Magyar and Italian nobilities in particular and who supported Radetzky's campaign in Lombardy-Venetia against the nobles and in favour of the Italian peasantry.<sup>69</sup> In Croatia, the Croat leader, Ban Joseph Jelačić, who abolished serfdom and forced labour in Croatia in April 1848, wanted a federalised monarchy in which Croatia, with its own elected parliament (which granted new civil rights to all Croats in August 1848), would run its own affairs, leaving foreign and defence affairs to Vienna,<sup>70</sup> whereas Schwarzenberg wanted a bureaucratically based government, run from Vienna, perhaps with a role for a parliament, albeit not one dominated by aristocrats. Franz Joseph clearly wanted to revert to the system of his grandfather, Francis I.<sup>71</sup>

How then did the dynasty, the Habsburgs themselves, view the nationality problem? Their attitude was once summed up by the Archduke Albrecht as follows:

in a polyglot empire inhabited by many races and peoples, the dynasty must not allow itself to be assigned exclusively to any one of these. Just as a good mother, it must show equal love for all its children and remain foreign to none. In this lies the justification for its existence.<sup>72</sup>

Well, that was certainly part of the story. In fact, the Habsburgs thought of themselves as a German dynasty and Metternich regarded the Monarchy as primarily a German state, whose civil service (outside Hungary) and armed forces (everywhere) used German as the language of command and administration. Yet, the duties owed by emperors to the different nationalities were taken very seriously. All emperors and most archdukes learned several languages fluently – six or seven were not uncommon – and the emperor would travel around his lands with little in the way of security chatting to the local peasants in their local languages. Or the

<sup>69</sup> On Schwarzenberg, see Sked, 'Galician Massacres'.

<sup>70</sup> On Jelačić, see A. Sked, 'Jelačić in the Summer of 1848,' *Südost-Forschungen*, 57 (1988), 129–64 and A. Sked, 'Mirror Images: Kossuth and Jelačić in 1848–49,' in L. Péter, M. Rady and P. Sherwood (eds.), *Lajos Kossuth Sent Word ... Papers Delivered on the Occasion of Kossuth's Birth* (London: Hungarian Cultural Centre, 2003), pp. 135–82.

<sup>71</sup> On Franz Joseph's manoeuvrings to return to absolutism, see Sked, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in B. Hamann, 'Die Habsburger und die deutsche Frage im 19. Jahrhundert,' in H. Lutz and H. Rumpel (eds.), *Österreich und die deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Probleme der politisch-staatlichen und soziokulturellen Differenzierung im deutschen Mitteleuropa* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1982), pp. 212–30, 222.

peasants could come to Vienna and discuss their problems with him. Even the mentally retarded Ferdinand I could open the Hungarian diet in Hungarian. On the other hand, the empire did not simply exist as a means of keeping the nationalities happy. It was, rather, the territorial base for dynastic power politics in international affairs. Hence the nationalities were expected to show loyalty to their emperor, who conducted foreign and defence affairs on their behalf, although he governed each of them separately according to their traditional constitutions. He looked after their affairs for them, while they, through their diets, provided him with money and soldiers. They were encouraged to foster their own languages and cultures, literatures and histories, so long as they abjured from demanding political changes and concessions. The emperor never contemplated political concessions to any particular nationality since he knew that they would only lead to further demands and be demanded in the other lands he ruled. As Francis I put it: 'No, every concession is dangerous. Man with his insatiable nature always asks for something more. Give him the hand and he wants the arm; give him the arm and he wants the whole body; I do not wish to give them my head.'<sup>73</sup> The emperor instead demanded *Kaisertreue* or loyalty to himself, who alone was capable of holding everything together. Otherwise, given political self-rule, the nations of Central Europe would go their separate ways. Hence Francis' question when told that someone was an Austrian patriot: 'But is he a patriot for me?'<sup>74</sup>

The fact remains, however, that right up to the outbreak of revolution, despite all the frustrations with the local nobilities, the Austrian government was trying to accommodate change. For years, it undertook detailed discussions with representatives of the Bohemian Diet in an attempt to introduce (albeit relatively minor) reforms, while allowing the Czech nationalist movement every freedom to develop its cultural activities. As late as 1847, the mayor of Prague's complaints about Czech nationalism were dismissed (officially, merely 'recorded') by Vienna, which told him:

Slavism is allowed unlimited freedom so long as it remains within the limits of the law, refrains from interfering in the jurisdiction of the governmental authorities and does not descend into political delusions.<sup>75</sup>

In Hungary the constitutional problem was a much more difficult one. The country's ancient constitution, confirmed by Leopold II in 1790, enabled the Magyar aristocrats and gentry to think of their state as an

<sup>73</sup> 'Francis to Judge Antonio Salvotti', quoted in A. Luzio, *Antonio Salvotti e i Processi del Ventuno* (Rome: Dante Alighieri, 1901), p. 129.

<sup>74</sup> Apocryphal perhaps. <sup>75</sup> Schlitter, vol. II, *Böhmen*, p. 80.

independent one, linked to Austria only through the person of the monarch. They also believed that if Hungary enacted modern reforms then the lesser nations ('nationalities', or *nemzetiségek*, as opposed to the Magyar nation, or *nemzet*) should, in return for the rights of modern citizenship, abandon their own nationalisms and become magyarised. Even the Hungarian Palatine, the Habsburg Archduke Joseph, gave vent to such a view. Speaking in the Upper Chamber of the Hungarian Diet on 28 June 1842, he said in Hungarian: '*itt nincs ilyr; nincs más nemzet – mint magyar*',<sup>76</sup> meaning: 'Here in Hungary there are no Illyrians (South Slavs); there are no nations save the Hungarians.' Metternich, however, would tolerate no political battle between Magyar and South Slavs in Hungary and had the emperor issue a proclamation as king of Hungary which read in part:

I will have order in my empire. My duty is to uphold it where it exists and to restore it where it is endangered. This can only be achieved when justice is protected. Thus there will be no contest between Illyrianism and Magyarism. Croatia has rights. I will know how to protect them.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from protecting the rights of the South Slavs and encouraging cultural Illyrianism, Metternich used two other strategies in the 1840s to combat Hungarian nationalism: first, under a new Hungarian chancellor, George Apponyi, he replaced elected county sheriffs with appointed administrators; and second, he co-operated with a new conservative party, founded in 1846 by Counts Emil Dessewffy and Anton Széchen. These strategies moreover, had some success, given that, despite the politicisation of Hungarian society in the 1840s through hundreds of charities, reading clubs and casinos, with membership totalling about 100,000, the liberals still failed to win a majority in the 1847 Hungarian Diet.

In Lombardy-Venetia, too, there was a move to accommodate Italian grievances, with the Count of Ficquelmont, a man widely regarded as Metternich's successor, should the state chancellor ever be replaced, being sent down to Milan in September 1847 to investigate Italian grievances and their possible remedy. His solution was a proposal to reform the Vice-Regal Council in an attempt to delude Italians that Lombardy-Venetia would receive self-government. And even

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in A. Suppan, 'Der Illyrusmus zwischen Wien und Ofen-Pest; Die illyrischen Zeitungen im Spannungsfeld der Zensurpolitik (1835 bis 1843)', pp. 102–24, p. 118, ft. 78, in Moritsch, *Austroslavismus*.

<sup>77</sup> For the proclamation and the language question in Hungary in 1842, see G. Miskolcsy (ed.), *A horvát kérdés története és irományai a rendi állam korában*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1927–8), vol. II, pp. 21–31.

Metternich was prepared to consider it until the viceroy issued a proclamation (his first since 1818!) announcing that he was awaiting reforms from Vienna. This proved too much for Metternich, who saw the proclamation as a public confession of weakness, hence he resorted to traditional Austrian policy. He told Ficquelmont: 'only by centralising the action of the various branches of authority is it possible to establish its unity and hence its force. Power distributed is no longer power.'<sup>78</sup> On another occasion he wrote to Ficquelmont again, arguing: 'here is what is needed: that what we order on this side of the Alps should be carried out on the other; that people there should not seek to weaken our directives but to put them into effect exactly as ordered.'<sup>79</sup> Ficquelmont resigned, although his own proposals had been basically dishonest. In his own words:

The government needs a new engine to give it energy without changing its organisation . . . The question which we have to solve, then, is as follows. How can we go on running the Kingdom as a *subject* province, but organise and above all govern it in such a fashion that we might present it as an Italian state to the hostile movement that the other states want to stir up against us?<sup>80</sup>

In the event, the Italians and Hungarians in 1848–49 proved Francis right. Italian nationalists did not care that the Austrians had the best record in governing Italy. They still wanted rid of them.<sup>81</sup> The Hungarians, for their part, once given substantial concessions, just acted as if they were fully independent.<sup>82</sup> They had no sense of being part of a wider empire. Their own kingdom was all they cared about and the master plan of the new constitutional Hungarian government in 1848 after the outbreak of revolution immediately became one of encouraging the Italians and Germans to unite, forcing the Habsburgs to become a purely Hungarian dynasty, ruling a purely Hungarian kingdom in which the Slavs would become Magyars.<sup>83</sup>

In 1848, it was not domestic problems but the news from France which occasioned revolution. A street riot in Vienna led to Metternich's resignation, which in turn led to a power vacuum, which in turn led to revolutions throughout the Monarchy. In Vienna, Metternich's

<sup>78</sup> Vienna, *Haus-Hof-und Staatsarchiv*, 'Metternich to Ficquelmont', 23 January 1848, H-HSA. PL-V, K. 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 February 1848.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, Vienna, *Haus-Hof-und Staatsarchiv*, 'Ficquelmont to Metternich', 27 December 1847.

<sup>81</sup> As Daniele Manin, the head of the Venetian Republic of 1848 put it: 'We do not ask for Austria to become more humane, we want her to go away altogether.' Quoted in P. Orsi, *Modern Italy, 1748–1898* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1899), p. 241.

<sup>82</sup> See Sked, *Mirror Images* and Hajnal, *A Batthyány- Kormány*.

<sup>83</sup> Hajnal, *A Batthyány- Kormány*.



colleagues remained in charge save for a few weeks in October. Yet concessions were made everywhere. Hungary exploited the situation to win the April Laws, which the new Hungarian government interpreted from the very start as meaning full-scale independence. Bohemia received a Charter which guaranteed equal rights for Czechs and Germans, a new diet, a separate administration, though not a separate government, and future consideration of union with Moravia and Silesia. Lombardy-Venetia was offered first home rule and then Lombard independence. Austria itself was to get a parliament, a national guard, and an academic legion. Everywhere there was to be freedom of the press and assembly and free speech.

There is little reason to suppose that these concessions were not meant to be genuine. With the exception of the reactionary Windischgrätz, even the army's main leaders were well disposed towards free institutions. Jelačić, Ban of Croatia, presided over a regime there that abolished serfdom and worked through an elected assembly. Radetzky, who had always foreseen the triumph of constitutionalism, pledged the army to protect the new institutions. Yet a number of things went wrong.

First, the Lombards and Venetians rejected Vienna's concessions and voted to unite with Piedmont-Sardinia, whose king, Charles Albert, until 1848 Austria's main ally in Italy, invaded Lombardy-Venetia. This meant full-scale war, during which the Hungarians, unlike the Croats, refused to reinforce Radetzky. Indeed, they cut themselves off militarily and financially from Vienna and pursued a separate foreign policy, predicated on the empire's collapse. Radetzky's triumph in Italy, therefore, exposed them to Habsburg revenge, especially when they refused in August 1848 to return the management of finance, defence, and foreign affairs to Vienna. This led to all-out war in Hungary, where the Slavs and Romanians were in revolt against Budapest. The Croats in particular would not accept Magyar rule, with Jelačić, who had been abandoned by Vienna while the war with Sardinia was still being fought, telling his superiors there:

It is an undeniable fact that the Grenzer [Croat] regiments will not recognise the Hungarian ministry under any circumstances, and that I – even if I wanted to – could not subordinate myself to the ministry since in that case the General Command would lose its own authority and the maintenance of law and order among the populace as among the border regiments would certainly break down.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, 'Jelačić to War Minister Latour', 8 August 1848, MK (1848) No. 4123.

His own ideal was for a federal monarchy in which the provinces would govern themselves but in which imperial finance, foreign, and defence affairs would be left to Vienna. The idea of a separate Hungarian state, joined only to Vienna through a personal monarchical union, was anathema to him.

Radetzky started out believing in a liberal constitutional order and wrote of Austria's April constitution:

It rests on so liberal a base, that I take it to be the most liberal in Europe. That the press will find something in it to blame, we must expect, but I hope, however, that the best part of the nation will find in it a guarantee of all the wishes and ideas with which they believe their happiness is bound.<sup>85</sup>

In September 1848 he protested the army's support for the new institutions:

The army has no reason to retain any predilection for the system which has fallen. This system was, if it can be called a despotism, a civil – not a military – despotism. The army was neglected, slighted; it, therefore, expressed no spirit of hostility at all against the free institutions which His Majesty conferred upon his peoples.<sup>86</sup>

However, Radetzky's mind was changed by the refusal of the Reichstag to congratulate his troops on their victory in Italy in August 1848 and by the brutal murder of the war minister, Count Latour, by the Vienna mob on 6 October 1848. The actions of the Hungarians plus the rejection of Austria as part of Germany by the deputies in Frankfurt would then confirm his belief that Central Europe was not ready for democracy. When his army was asked to participate in elections to the Reichstag, it refused, telling the emperor in a petition:

No, Your Majesty, the army does not seek to take part in Parliamentary debates; you would soon perceive a want in it of harmony, a want of discipline, you would perceive the ruin of the Monarchy. The army seeks to encircle Your Majesty's throne, the confines of the Monarchy with an iron bulwark; it seeks to watch over the laws of the country, to protect the Monarchy against its domestic enemies as well as to preserve its integrity against foreign enemies; but it seeks to remain within the limits of the position which the legislature of all nations assign to the army.<sup>87</sup>

The Vienna Revolution of October 1848, which broke out when troops were ordered to march against Hungary, brought Windischgrätz and

<sup>85</sup> Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, 'Radetzky to War Minister Zanini', 29 April 1848, KA. MK. (1848), No. 958/996.

<sup>86</sup> Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, 'Radetzky to War Minister Latour', 30 September 1848, KA. MK. No. 6598.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in *British Foreign and State Papers, 1853–1854* (London: Ridgway, 1865), vol. 44, pp. 393–94.

Jelačić to the city, to crush it and to defeat its would-be Hungarian allies. By December 1848, Franz Joseph had replaced Ferdinand as emperor and Windischgrätz's brother-in-law, Prince Schwarzenberg, had been installed as prime minister. The Reichstag remained in session, still working on a permanent constitution, with the ministry still responsible to it, while Hungary was put under military rule. Ignoring Windischgrätz, Schwarzenberg appointed a cabinet full of liberals and told the Reichstag:<sup>88</sup> 'The Ministry does not want to lag behind in the attempt to realise liberal and popular institutions; rather, it regards it as a duty to place itself at the head of this movement. We want constitutional monarchy sincerely and unreservedly.' There was to be equality before the law, equal rights for all peoples, free and transparent government. However, Lombardy-Venetia and Hungary were to be united within the Monarchy 'in one great body politic', which presumed a new course also for Germany, the policy for which would be outlined later. Franz Joseph's own proclamation was even more liberal.

Yet by 1851, Austria had returned to a form of centralism and absolutism even more severe than under Francis and Metternich. What then had gone wrong?

Schwarzenberg's own commitment to constitutionalism seems to have been genuine. He even stood, albeit unsuccessfully, for election to the Reichstag in July 1848 in Bohemia.<sup>89</sup> He was also brutally frank in opposing Windischgrätz's ideas of aristocratic rule. Instead, he blamed the Revolution in Poland in 1846 and in Lombardy-Venetia and Hungary in 1848 on the local aristocracies. He said of the Hungarians: 'The Hungarian aristocracy is a politically and morally degenerate body . . . One can be of old lineage, have an old title and call oneself an aristocrat but still be a supporter of revolution.'<sup>90</sup> Of the aristocracy, he was equally clear:

I have thought a great deal about how to constitute the aristocracy of Austria as a body so as to maintain for it an appropriate political influence but the elements out of which this body consists, I have been unable to find. Democracy must be fought and its excesses must be challenged but in the absence of other means of help, that can only be done by the government itself. To rely on an ally as weak as our aristocracy unfortunately is, would be to damage our cause more than to help it.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> R. Kiszling, *Fürst Felix zu Schwarzenberg. Der politische Lehrmeister Kaiser Franz Josephs* (Graz: H. Böhlau Nachf., 1952), p. 52.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in E. Heller, *Mitteleuropas Vorkämpfer: Fürst Felix zu Schwarzenberg* (Vienna: Militärwissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1933), p. 265.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 265–66.

However, the Reichstag, which had got the job of drafting the new constitution at Krems, went rather off the rails by adopting a clause by which all power proceeded 'from the people'. This was later dropped but then the monarch was left with only a suspensive veto on domestic legislation; all titles were to be abolished and the leading position of the Roman Catholic Church in religious affairs was ended. Worst of all, no provisions were made to constitutionally incorporate Hungary or Lombardy-Venetia, which were to get separate constitutions. Hence the government decreed its own constitution on 4 March 1849 and dissolved the Reichstag.

This new 'Stadion constitution' (named after the interior minister) retained all the freedoms and rights of the Kremsier version but gave the monarch a veto over legislation and created a unified monarchy in which there would be only one citizenship, one monarch, one coronation, and one customs union. All internal tariffs were to be abolished. Still, there was to be a responsible ministry, a parliament, civil rights, and equality of national rights. There was also to be an Imperial Council or *Reichsrat* to advise the monarch.

Yet this constitution never came into effect. No elections were called and Franz Joseph brought in a financial expert, Baron Kübeck, to build up the *Reichsrat* as a counterweight to the cabinet before abolishing both. Schwarzenberg was probably too busy to defend the new constitution: wars were continuing in Italy and Hungary, the German situation had also brought Austria to the very brink of war with Prussia, and it was very difficult to oppose the clearly absolutist pretensions of the new monarch while revolution was still being suppressed. In any case, Schwarzenberg died in April 1852. Thereafter, Austria was run by the army and by a centralised bureaucracy under the so-called 'Bach System'. She signed a treaty in 1853 with the Zollverein, which brought more or less free trade with Germany, but failed at Dresden in 1850–51 to persuade the German states to allow the whole monarchy to unite with them politically and commercially in a 'Reich of Seventy Millions'. Thereafter, her Crimean War diplomacy would isolate her in Europe, so that the decade of the 1850s would end in catastrophe.<sup>92</sup>

What conclusions can be drawn from all this? First, there was no 'camarilla' or secret plot by generals and courtiers to crush the revolutions. Most of the leading generals refused to co-operate with one another; indeed, they often despised one another. Both Radetzky and Windischgrätz clashed with Vienna, yet offered to resign rather than to disobey orders. They had a very wide range of views politically, while the

<sup>92</sup> See A. Sked, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 4.

key figure politically for a key period, Schwarzenberg, probably did believe in parliamentary government. Crucially, however, Franz Joseph wanted a return to absolutism.

Second, the outbreak of war in Italy and Hungary caused by nationalist intransigence meant that military values would prevail. And occupying armies do not usually bestow immediate political compromises.

Third, the old view that democracy leads to war and revolution was, for many people, confirmed.

Finally, the nationality problem was not responsible for the triumph of the counter-revolution in Hungary. Jelačić was defeated when he invaded the country in September 1848 and played little part in the 1849 campaign; General Bem, meanwhile, kept Transylvania under the control of the Magyars for most of the war, thus neutralising the Romanians there; it should also be stressed that the Russians avoided the Hungarians for the most part when they invaded in 1849 and lost most of their casualties to cholera and disease. Thus in the end, the Austrian army defeated the Hungarians, who had no armaments industry and no allies to supply them with arms. They often ran out of ammunition and one shot in four misfired when they used their rifles. They had inspired civil and military leaders but never really stood much chance of success.<sup>93</sup> So they were forced to surrender and Kossuth fled into exile. However, just as under Metternich, so, too, during the revolutions and indeed during the later history of the Monarchy and during the First World War, the 'nationality question' has been much over-rated. The Habsburgs were happy to encourage the cultural progress of their subject peoples before 1848 and, to start with, were equally happy to make large political concessions to them after revolution broke out in 1848. It was the intransigence of the ruling classes in Italy and Hungary, the outbreak of war, and the consequences of war which frustrated peaceful political progress of a kind which *might* have made the Monarchy a very different one indeed.

<sup>93</sup> The best account of the war in Hungary remains I. Deak's, *The Lawful Revolution. Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–49* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

## 15 National Movements against Nation States

Bohemia and Lombardy between the Habsburg Monarchy, the German Confederation, and Piedmont-Sardinia

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*Axel Körner*

### I Philosophy of History and Nationalism

Nineteenth-century philosophy of history described the emergence of nation states as a natural, universal, and therefore inescapable stage in the development of humankind.<sup>1</sup> Advocates of this view attached a particular semantic quality to the temporality of this development, which understood the nation state to be modern, and other forms of states as relics of the past and barriers against progress. This concept of historical time was informed by a strong bias in favour of historical and allegedly civilised nations, dividing the world into nations that had gained the right to form independent states and others that had to be assimilated into more worthy nations or were to be kept under imperial domination.

While the identification of nationality as a natural right goes back to the eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried Herder did not conclude from this position that nations had to form states, or that nation states were more natural than other forms of state.<sup>2</sup> In the twentieth century legal theorists and politicians interpreted national self-determination in terms of independent statehood as the foundation of a new world order.<sup>3</sup> This new concept did little to solve the problem of colonialism; and many of the new states that were founded on Wilsonian principles continued to suppress the rights of their own national minorities.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the

<sup>1</sup> A precondition for this process was to link nationality to statehood, as it occurred during the French Revolution. See R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> F. M. Barnard, *Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to popular belief, self-determination was not spelled out in President Wilson's Fourteen Points of January 1918, but included in a speech to Congress four weeks later: E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the Intellectual Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> On the failure of liberal anti-colonialism see Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, p. 137. The writer and journalist Joseph Roth is one of the early observers of the new forms of

weaker and less lucky among these new independent nation states were soon dominated (and sometimes extinguished) by a small number of bigger powers.

Many historians tend to read the nineteenth-century notion of progress towards independent nation states as a process of modernisation, accepting its supposedly natural foundations. Like nineteenth-century nationalists, they assume that social groups that identify themselves in terms of nationality automatically aspired to independent statehood. This scheme privileges ethnic origins and common language over other forms of political organisation based on civic consensus, dynastic loyalty, or a sense of territorial legitimacy associated with historical borders. Any alternative to the emergence of ethnocentric nation states is thought to contradict the laws of historical progress.

If we look at the Habsburg monarchy in 1848 these philosophical elaborations on the logic of nation states are not helpful. In 1848 radical democrats, national liberals, Young – and Old Hegelians, as well as Karl Marx's early followers, all agreed in condemning the Habsburg monarchy as a reactionary relic of past times, symbolised by common comparisons between the Austrian and the Chinese Empires, separated by a wall from the rest of humanity.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, a majority of the kingdoms, duchies, and principalities that formed the Austrian Empire, as well as many of the nationalities that populated these lands, voiced growing concern over the political rhetoric that gave rise to the quest for nation states. Instead of asking for separate statehood, they articulated their critique of the Restoration regime in terms of demands for political representation and the recognition of their national rights within a reformed Empire. For some political thinkers and publicists this took the novel form of federal arrangements within the empire, understood as an alternative to previous forms of imperial rule, but also to the prospect of centralised nation states.

In 1848 we find different examples of these ideas in Lombardy and Bohemia, two territories of the Habsburg monarchy that share important features of economic and civil development. In the context of a history of 1848 political thought it seems remarkable that most national movements

suppression in Central Europe. See J. Roth *Reisen in die Ukraine und nach Russland*, (J. Bürger, ed.), (Munich: Beck, 2015), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Among the most eloquent rejections of alternatives to the nation state were those by Marx and Engels. See for instance F. Engels, 'Der Anfang vom Ende Österreichs', 27 January 1848, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975–2004) [subsequently *MECW*], vol. IV (Berlin: Dietz, 1972), pp. 504–10. On the China metaphor, K. Marx, 'Die Revolution in China und Europa', 20 May 1853 in *MECW*, vol. IX (Berlin: Dietz, 1960), pp. 95–102, 97. For further analysis see E. Hanisch, *Der kranke Mann an der Donau. Marx und Engels über Österreich* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1978), p. 31.



emerging under Habsburg rule during the so-called Restoration period did not consider independent national statehood to be a political objective, but (if they considered it at all) as a last resort, despite the powerful association of 1848 as the 'springtime of peoples'. For some of these movements independent statehood came to form part of their political programmes only once the revolutions had been defeated; others hesitated to contemplate this idea until the empire's collapse during the First World War.

Contrary to the assumptions of nineteenth-century philosophers of history and later generations of historians working under their spell, not all national movements automatically aspired to become independent nation states, especially in Central Europe. For many of them the concept of empire as represented by the Austrian *Kaiserstaat* acquired a new semantic content around 1848.<sup>6</sup> National movements in the region had a clear understanding of the risks involved in transforming the political map of Europe into one dominated by nation states. Based in particular on the observation of Magyarisation in Hungary since 1841, these movements knew that nation states were unlikely to tolerate cultural or linguistic diversity within their territories, that ethnic minorities would be forced to amalgamate with the majority. Moreover, they realised that small nation states would live under a constant threat of being dominated by larger powers, especially by Germany and Russia. The fears associated with the formation of independent nation states among the empire's less powerful, mostly Slavonic-speaking minorities became increasingly apparent during and after the Revolutions of 1848, when they took account of the effects of ever more aggressive forms of German and Magyar nationalism.

From the point of view of standard accounts of the Italian Risorgimento it might seem provocative to argue that the formation of centralised nation states also aroused fears and resentment among sections of the Italian national movement, in this case concerning the expansionist aims of Piedmont-Sardinia. The point of comparing these two different cases here is that Slavonic and Italian populations coexisted under the same Habsburg monarchy; that both witnessed revolutions in 1848; and that in both cases nationalism was a significant catalyst for unrest. While the formation of an

<sup>6</sup> The idea that as a consequence of nationalism empire had lost its significance is therefore misleading, at least for the Slavonic minorities. For this line of argument see for instance G. Schödl, 'Jenseits von Bürgergesellschaft und nationalem Staat. Die Völker Ostmitteleuropas 1848/49' in W. Hardtwig (ed.) *Revolution in Deutschland und Europa 1848/49* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), pp. 207–39, 215. For a more positive perspective on Empire see P. M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

Italian nation state under the House of Savoy did not involve the same risks as linguistic and cultural assimilation within a Hungarian or German nation state, there was a distinct and widespread feeling in Lombardy, most prominently expressed by the political theorist and protagonist of 1848 Carlo Cattaneo, that the region's submission under Piedmont would destroy a historically rooted notion of civic identity that had been largely compatible with Habsburg rule, but was doomed to vanish under the autocratic centralism of the Piedmontese monarchy and an emerging Italian nation state.

## II 'Kaiserstaat' and 'Landespatriotismus' in Bohemia

The House of Habsburg had ruled the Lands of the Bohemian Crown since the sixteenth century, consisting of the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Moravia, and the Duchy of Silesia, which is the small part of Silesia the Habsburgs were able to retain during the eighteenth-century wars with Prussia. These territories were also referred to as the Bohemian or Czech lands, reflecting the fact that the Czech language has no separate word for Bohemia. It was thanks to the crown of St Wenceslas that the Habsburgs formed part of the electoral college of the Holy Roman Empire, which ratified the Habsburg succession to the imperial title.<sup>7</sup> Following Napoleonic pressure the Holy Roman Empire ceased to exist and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown became crown-lands of the new Austrian Empire, which had been created in 1804.<sup>8</sup> As former territories of the Holy Roman Empire, after 1815 they also formed part of the German Confederation, the empire's official successor created at the Congress of Vienna.<sup>9</sup>

Linguistic issues are key to addressing questions of nationality and empire in Bohemia. The Bohemian Lands included a majority of Czech speakers, a large proportion of German speakers, a small group of Polish speakers as well as a few speakers of other Slavonic languages and dialects. Members of these different linguistic groups lived in urban as well as in

<sup>7</sup> On Bohemia's historical position within the Empire see P. H. Wilson, *Heart of Europe. A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 207.

<sup>8</sup> R. J. W. Evans, 'Communicating empire: the Habsburgs and their critics, 1700–1919 (The Prothero Lecture)' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. Sixth Series, XIX (2009), 117–38.

<sup>9</sup> On the complications arising in 1848 from Bohemia's membership of the German Confederation see J. Kořalka, 'Prag – Frankfurt im Frühjahr 1848: Österreich zwischen Grossdeutschtum und Austroslawismus' in H. Lutz and H. Rumpel (eds.), *Österreich und die deutsche Frage im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik Wien, 1982), pp. 117–39.

rural areas and thus were distributed, with some regional differences, over of the crown's three territories. Bilingualism was relatively widespread beyond the better-educated classes, but only since the end of the eighteenth century did Czech re-emerge as a language of literature, science, and polite conversation, supported by enlightened circles of German speakers who associated the use of Czech with the ancient origins of their lands and demands for greater independence from Viennese rule. The revival of Czech was helped by educational reforms introduced under Maria Theresa, making the literacy rate in Bohemia the highest in Europe, with slightly higher rates among Czech than German speakers.<sup>10</sup> This trend also explains Bohemia's surprising number of university students of peasant origin.<sup>11</sup> Support for the use of Czech in daily life also came from the arts and literature. Under Joseph II alone, more than 300 plays in Czech reached the stage.<sup>12</sup> The *Matice Česká*, which supported the publication of Czech books, had 4,500 subscribers by 1847, many of them native speakers of German.<sup>13</sup> One of the reasons why over the centuries Czech had been pushed aside by German was a feeling that the language no longer allowed to adequately reflect modern thought and recent developments in science. Some supporters of the Czech linguistic revival even opposed the language's adaptation to modern standards, preferring instead to preserve the language of the seventeenth century. The historian František Palacký and the over seventy scholars who regularly contributed to his journal, *Časopis Českeho Museum*, made a major contribution to reversing this trend. By 1838 the journal had 1,000 subscribers and many more readers using it in public libraries.<sup>14</sup> It would be wrong to describe the periodical

<sup>10</sup> J. Havránek, 'The Education of Czechs and Slovaks under foreign domination, 1850–1918' in J. Havránek, *University, Historiography, Society, Politics. Selected Studies* (J. Pešek, ed.), pp. 43–65, 44. For a general overview of the Czech revival see H. LeCaine Agnew, *Origins of the Czech National Renaissance* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> M. Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 57. For a critical account of the role of peasants in the Czech revival around 1848 see P. Heumos, *Agrarische Interessen und nationale Politik in Böhmen 1848–1889* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979), pp. 1–21.

<sup>12</sup> C. Thienen-Adlerflycht, *Graf Leo Thun im Vormärz. Grundlagen des böhmischen Konservatismus im Kaisertum Österreich* (Graz-Vienna-Cologne: Böhlau, 1967), p. 155. On Joseph's role see also R. Evans, 'Joseph II and nationality in the Habsburg lands' in *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs. Central Europe c. 1683–1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 134–46.

<sup>13</sup> J. Havránek, 'Bohemian Spring 1848: Conflict of loyalties and its picture in historiography' in A. Körner (ed.), *1848 – A European Revolution? International Ideas and National Memories of 1848* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 124–39, 124.

<sup>14</sup> For Palacký's role see J. Kofalka, *František Palacký (1798–1876), Der Historiker der Tschechen im österreichischen Vielvölkerstaat* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen

exclusively in terms of its contribution to the Czech national revival.<sup>15</sup> It was strongly supported by the Bohemian nobility and committed to the idea of asserting the historical rights of a kingdom that included Czech and German speakers. Instead of replacing one language with another, their idea was to achieve equality between Bohemia's two linguistic communities within a reformed empire.

The spread of bilingualism, a differentiated use of the country's two main languages according to circumstances, as well as the hybridity of national identity in ethnically mixed territories, make it problematic to provide exact figures for the proportion of Czech and German speakers in Bohemia. Although in some parts of the Bohemian lands, and among large sections of the population, a sense of national belonging was a relatively straightforward question, among the nobility not even genealogical research is able to clearly distinguish between families of German or Slavic origin.<sup>16</sup> These difficulties notwithstanding, most researchers would estimate that in 1850, of Bohemia's 7.9 million inhabitants, about 63 per cent can be considered Czechs and 36 per cent Germans.<sup>17</sup> Both communities included members of different social classes, with German speakers being active in mining as well as in crafts and industry since the Middle Ages, making it problematic to describe them as a 'foreign ruling class'.<sup>18</sup> Despite a certain resurgence of Protestantism as part of the Czech national revival, the kingdom's population was predominantly Catholic, with a strong Jewish minority that included German as well as Czech speakers.<sup>19</sup> Beyond traditional, religiously motivated anti-Judaism, there was a noticeable tendency within the Czech national movement to see the Jews of Bohemia as a separate nationality. Anti-Semitic riots in the early 1840s pushed some Bohemian Jews to take a pro-German position during the

Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), p. 179. On Palacký's earliest efforts to widen the vocabulary see, G. J. Morava, *Franz Palacký. Eine frühe Vision von Mitteleuropa* (Vienna: ÖBV, 1990), p. 32. For an example of the systematic introduction of new vocabulary, which continued beyond the 1840s, see J. J. Čejka, 'Sbírka slov a způsobu mluvení ze starých rukopisů lékařských' in *Časopis Českého Museum*, 22 (1848), 273–75.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance Hroch, who does not seem to differentiate between Czech nationalism and Bohemian Landes patriotism, *Social Preconditions*, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> R. Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble. Status and National Identity in Habsburg Bohemia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Havránek, 'Education of Czechs and Slovaks', p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> See Hroch, *Social Preconditions*, p. 44. For an overview of occupational structures see P. Horská, 'Obyvatelstvo českých zemí podle povolání' in L. Fialová et al., *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí* (Prague: Mladá Fronta, 1996), pp. 227–63. On the relationship between class and nationality also S. Z. Pech, *The Czech Revolution of 1848* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 17–21.

<sup>19</sup> For a statistical overview see J. Havránek, 'Die Juden zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen in Prag' in *University, Historiography, Society, Politics*, 377–87.

subsequent debates on the territorial aspirations of the Frankfurt Parliament, because compared to a Czech dominated Bohemia they considered a German nation state to offer more security to Jews.<sup>20</sup>

These constitutional and demographic explanations are necessary to shed light on the relationship between the political concepts of national belonging, statehood, and empire in Bohemia in 1848.<sup>21</sup> As briefly mentioned in the introduction, the Czechs offer the striking example of a national movement that did not attempt to establish an independent nation state or to break away from the empire during the revolution. In this respect Czech nationalism in 1848 is closely related to the political movements of the empire's other nationalities, notably the different Slavonic-speaking minorities in Hungary, which saw the institution of the empire as a life-saving protection against their annihilation under a Hungarian nation state. Because in 1848 the Czech revival was able to look back at a considerable period of historical and institutional consolidation within the empire, but also because Bohemia itself was a multinational state, the example serves to challenge simplistic assumptions that take a connection between nationalism and quests for independent statehood for granted.

When evaluating 1848 nationalism in the Habsburg Empire, it is important to look beyond the two most famous examples of the German and Hungarian Revolutions, both of which fundamentally questioned the persistence of an Austrian Empire on the political map of Europe. The Hungarian and the German national movements gained considerable publicity and support abroad, with political commentators keen to reduce the Habsburgs' relationship with their subject populations to the idea of a *Völkergefängnis*, a prison of nationalities. Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's description of Austria as a 'European China' and the immense popularity of Lajos Kossuth in England are different examples of this trend,

<sup>20</sup> For the debate in the 1840s see for instance 'Das Judenthum und die böhmische Literatur', *Jahrbücher für slawische Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft* V/1 (1847), pp. 8–12. For the rare example of a critical reflection on the connection between anti-Semitism and Czech nationalism see H. LeCaine Agnew, 'Czechs, Germans, Bohemians? Images of self and other in Bohemia to 1848' in N. M. Wingfield (ed.), *Creating the Other. Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp. 56–77, 70. For later developments see also N. M. Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints. How the Bohemian Lands became Czech* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 3, 101. Some modern authors still treat Jews as a separate ethnicity in Bohemia, J. Štaif, 'The image of the other in the nineteenth century. Historical scholarship in the Bohemian lands' in Wingfield (ed.), *Creating the Other*, 81–102, 82.

<sup>21</sup> For a recent regional overview of political thought around 1848 see B. Trencsényi, M. Janowski, M. Baar, M. Falina, and M. Kopecek, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*. Vol.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 236–76.

which still mark historiographical accounts of 1848. However, Magyar and German speakers represented only minorities within their respective parts of the empire; and their political aspirations were hardly representative of the majority of the empire's populations, who shared different levels of loyalty towards the House of Habsburg as well as to their respective crown-lands. Many of them put their fate into the hands of a reformed empire. They were fully aware of two things: that living in ethnically mixed territories, squeezed in between much more powerful states, made the prospect of ever forming their own independent nation states highly unlikely; and that any of Europe's larger emerging nation states would leave little or no space within their borders to allow these minorities to fulfil their cultural and linguistic aspirations. Confronted with this situation, only an empire that paid explicit reference to its multinational character offered these nationalities a future. It was this concept of an empire reformed along federal lines, in order to take account of its national and linguistic diversity, that inspired political thinkers in 1848. Czechs and Germans in Bohemia were at the forefront of these debates.

The political ideas of the historian František Palacký, *otec národa* (father of the [Czech] nation) as well as *spiritus rector* of its national movement, constitute the most significant contribution to efforts of reconciling a growing sense of ethnic identity with the legacies of a multinational kingdom that forms part of a multinational empire. Meanwhile, Palacký was only the most recent and prominent representative of these debates in Bohemia. His historical and constitutional concepts formed part of a much broader discussion on the future of the Bohemian lands, which had started during the decades before the revolution and included significant contributions by both Czech and German speakers, who shared a strong sense of identification with the history of their crown-lands as an ethnically mixed territory.

Due to a strong sense of dynastic loyalty, *Landespatriotismus* was largely compatible with identification with the Austrian *Kaiserstaat*, a concept of *Staatspatriotismus* not much different from that of the sovereign territorial states in the German Confederation.<sup>22</sup> That Bohemian *Landespatriotismus* also appealed to German speakers is reflected in the fact that in 1848, of the many thousand German speakers in Prague, not more than three took part in the elections to the Frankfurt parliament.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of these concepts see J. Kořalka, 'Welche Nationsvorstellungen gab es 1848 in Mitteleuropa?' in R. Jaworski and R. Luft (eds.), *1848/49. Revolutionen in Ostmitteleuropa* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 29–44.

<sup>23</sup> J. Havránek, 'The development of Czech nationalism' in *University, Historiography, Society, Politics*, 391–418, 400.



In Bohemia only twenty out of the sixty-eight districts held elections to the Frankfurt parliament.<sup>24</sup> As Austrian and Bohemian patriots, Germans in Prague felt overwhelmingly unconcerned by the events in Frankfurt. For this reason German speakers in other ethnically mixed parts of the empire, for instance in Tyrol, criticised the *Deutsch-Böhmen*, requesting support for the formation of a German nation state to include the territories of the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>25</sup> Many German speakers in Bohemia fully supported Czech demands for the recognition of their linguistic rights, also because the same policy would protect the rights of German speakers in the Czech-speaking districts of Bohemia.<sup>26</sup>

These debates also demonstrate that Bohemian *Landespatritismus* cannot be reduced to a purely aristocratic and feudal legacy.<sup>27</sup> The concept of an ethnically mixed Bohemia within a multinational empire represented a reality for most inhabitants of the region, for which it was difficult to envisage alternatives. Its conservation therefore appealed well beyond the nobility, even though debates were often dominated by demands for the recognition of the kingdom's Czech element.<sup>28</sup> This is not to deny that these debates also led to political tensions along ethnic or linguistic lines, which further increased during the revolution, but these were usually fuelled by extremists on both sides rather than the majority, and they often originated from Vienna.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> J. Havránek, 'Böhmen im Frühjahr 1848 – Vorbild der nationalen Problematik in Europa für das folgende Jahrhundert' in *University, Historiography, Society, Politics*, 419–32, 428. For Silesia and Moravia the quota was higher.

<sup>25</sup> *Wie die Tiroler dem Aufruf der boehm. Deputation geantwortet haben. Von dem Vereine der Deutschen aus Böhmen, Mähren, Schlesien und Steiermark zur Aufrechterhaltung ihrer Nationalität*. [gedruckt bei L. Sommer (vorm. Strauß)], British Library: Austrian Revolution Broad-sides 1848–1849. 1899.m.19/147.

<sup>26</sup> Havránek, 'Böhmen im Frühjahr 1848', 420 f. See also *Wahl-Manifest der Deutschen aus Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien zur Aufrechterhaltung ihrer Nationalität*, British Library: Austrian Revolution, Broad-sides 1848–1849, 1899.m.19/181.

<sup>27</sup> For a rather narrow Marxist approach to the Czech national question in 1848 see J. Polišenský, *Aristocrats and the Crowd in the Revolutionary Year 1848. A Contribution to the History of Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Austria* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980).

<sup>28</sup> As Havránek has argued, in 1848 the Czech national movement freed itself from the interference of the conservative aristocracy, which opposed social change and used *Landespatritismus* only as a way to hold off Austrian centralism. 'Development of Czech nationalism', 405.

<sup>29</sup> For an example of anti-Czech propaganda from Vienna see T. Scheibe, *Die Rebellen auf dem Schutthaufen in Prag. Haben sie capituliert? Heiliger Kreuzzug der Wiener gegen die Slavischen Meuchelmörder* (Vienna: Fridrich, n.d. British Library: Austrian Revolution Broad-sides 1848–1849) 1899. m.19/195. There is an interesting parallel to the role of nationalist organisations later in the nineteenth century, see P. M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). J. King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans. A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).



Reactions to a pamphlet published by Joseph Mathias Graf von Thun three years before the revolution show that the constitutional demands that emerged in 1848 had their origins in the pre-March period and were part of a much wider debate on identity issues in Bohemia.<sup>30</sup> Head of the family's Thun-Klösterle line, the author was also president of the Bohemian Museum, one of the country's principal academic and cultural organisations.<sup>31</sup> Adopting a tone that some Czech nationalists rejected as patronising, the principal point of Thun's pamphlet was not his passionate support for the Czechs' cultural and linguistic revival, which at that time was almost uncontroversial among the Bohemian elites, but his polemic against those German-nationalist scaremongers who tried to discredit this largely cultural movement as an aggressive form of Russian-sponsored Pan-Slavism.<sup>32</sup> One of the people Thun had in mind was the recently deceased Joseph Leonhard Knoll, a former professor of History and rector of Charles University Prague, who since the early 1830s had published various warnings against the 'tschechische Gefahr' (the Czech threat).<sup>33</sup> Seeing the future of the empire as exclusively German, Knoll was one of Palacký's most outspoken opponents. Unlike Knoll, Thun firmly rejected demands for the Germanisation of Czechs and insisted that Bohemia includes two linguistic communities of equal natural rights: 'Children of the same mother, albeit of different fathers, we are all Bohemians; not imposed toleration but love binds us together.'<sup>34</sup> The same idea also informed his understanding of the Austrian Empire:

not a federation of states, but of peoples ... Only if it recognises its different nationalities will the Empire find support; only as part of this powerful Empire Bohemia will be able to guard its nationality.<sup>35</sup>

Thun's idea of Bohemia shows explicit influences of Bernard Bolzano's teachings, at a time when many of the philosopher's works were still suppressed. For Bolzano, the principal voice of the late Austrian Enlightenment, not ethnic origin, but allegiance to the country in which people live and grow up formed the basis of true patriotism, especially where several peoples were united in one state.

<sup>30</sup> J. M. von Thun, *Der Slawismus in Böhmen. Besprochen von Jos. Math. Grafen v. Thun* (Prague: J. G. Calve'sche Buchhandlung, 1845).

<sup>31</sup> The literature on the institution and its periodical is huge. For a recent discussion in English see Krueger, *Status and National Identity*, p. 61.

<sup>32</sup> Thun, *Der Slawismus in Böhmen*, pp. 5, 7, 11.

<sup>33</sup> For biographical information see the obituary in *Moravia*, 5/19 (7 March 1842), 73–75.

<sup>34</sup> Thun, *Der Slawismus in Böhmen*, pp. 6, 11. <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Love and embrace one another as equal children of one, the One Fatherland . . . Bohemia, as unhappy as it is now, could elevate itself to the happiest country in Europe.<sup>36</sup>

In the interest of equality, each constituency 'shall learn the other's language', starting from academic institutions to spread all over the Bohemian lands.<sup>37</sup> Many of Bolzano's followers shared an interest in Leibniz's doctrine of cosmic harmony. Originally drafted in 1810, Thun translated Bolzano's ideas into the modern language of the post-Napoleonic age.

A particularly influential response to Thun's pamphlet was printed by the Leipzig-based publisher of the *Jahrbücher für Slavische Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft*, which advocated a mostly cultural form of pan-Slavism.<sup>38</sup> Like Thun, the anonymous author rejected demands for the assimilation of Czechs. References in the text suggest that the author's main target was the radical democratic nationalism of Young Germany.<sup>39</sup> Their agitations were supported by some Austrian exiles, but were certainly not representative of the position of most Bohemian German speakers. Moreover, Young Germany never assumed a clear organisational structure; and for many it remained principally a literary movement.<sup>40</sup> What united them was a loose association with Young Hegelianism and their opposition to the political structures of the Vienna settlement. The poets Alfred Meissner and Moritz Hartmann identified with Young Germany, but at least prior to 1848 they viewed the Czech national revival with sympathy.<sup>41</sup>

Thun's anonymous respondent advocated the political recognition of the Austrian state's Slavic elements. The author wanted to be acknowledged not as Bohemian, but as a Czech within the Austrian federation of peoples, challenging traditional notions of Bohemian

<sup>36</sup> B. Bolzano, *Was ist Vaterland und Vaterlandsiebe? In einer Rede an die akademische Jugend im Jahre 1810* (Prague: E.W., 1850), p. 3. Here we find an interesting parallel to Metternich's political thought. While he actively promoted national literature, culture and music, and the use of national languages, he strongly rejected the modish idea of removing historical borders in order to establish new states based on nationality, which would immediately turn against one another. See in particular the new study by W. Siemann, *Metternich. Stratege und Visionär. Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2016).

<sup>37</sup> Bolzano, *Was ist Vaterland und Vaterlandsiebe*, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Anon., *Worte eines Česchen veranlasst durch die Graf Jos. Math. v. Thun'sche Broschüre: Der Slawismus in Böhmen* (Leipzig: Expedition der slavischen Jahrbücher, 1845). As for the text's long-term relevance see O. Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung Ignaz Brand, 1907).

<sup>39</sup> Anon., *Worte eines Česchen*, pp. 13, 18.

<sup>40</sup> H. Rumpel, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa. Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna: Ueberreuther, 1997), p. 270.

<sup>41</sup> Morava, *Franz Palacký*, p. 108.

*Landespatriotismus*.<sup>42</sup> Slavs accounted for more than half of the empire's population, the author argued, of which 7 million use the Czech language. In order to survive Austria had to recognise this fact. Meanwhile, the author saw Magyarisation, not German nationalism, as the empire's principal threat.<sup>43</sup> Unlike the Magyars, the Czechs support the empire, because a departure of Hungary and Bohemia from the empire would separate Czechs from 3 million Slovaks, whom they saw as a brother-nation.<sup>44</sup> It was for this reason that Austro-Slavism, unlike Hungarian nationalism, was not necessarily controversial in imperial circles, a position supported by many members of the Bohemian aristocracy, who saw it as a way to protect themselves from Viennese centralism while maintaining the constitutional structure of the *Kaiserstaat*.

Despite the pamphlet's self-confident emphasis on the empire's Slavic element, it abstained from anti-German resentment. Thun received more critical reactions from those Czechs, who supported an openly aggressive approach to the assertion of their rights and rejected the idea of different linguistic communities living peacefully together. In addition to taking issue with Thun's benevolent support of the Czech revival, considered inappropriate in the light of their cultural and historical achievements, another anonymous contributor to the debate denied any feeling of attachment to the Bohemian crown. Denouncing the reactionary elements behind the concept of *Landespatriotismus*, the author fought for what he calls a 'universal pan-Slavic nationality'.<sup>45</sup> If Czechs and Germans in Bohemia were to become one, as Thun (in the tradition of Bolzano) envisions, Germans would have to be assimilated to Czechs, strictly following the example set by the policy of Magyarisation in Hungary.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the author polemically rejects the widespread cosmopolitanism of Bohemia's social elites by questioning the cultural values of a people that teaches its own children the languages of 'French decadence' and 'English foolishness'.<sup>47</sup> Instead of demanding equality between Bohemia's two language groups, the author assumes a hierarchy

<sup>42</sup> Anon., *Worte eines Česchen*, p. 16. <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Křen, however, suggests that Czechs increasingly sought to distance themselves from close association with the Slovaks: *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft*, p. 85. Also see Rumppler, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa*, p. 182.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., *J. M. Graf Thun und der Slavismus in Böhmen* (Leipzig: Wilh. Engelmann, 1845), p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. Also Bernard Bolzano was critical of cosmopolitanism, but without turning it into an insult against other peoples: *Was ist Vaterland und Vaterlandsliebe?*, p. 10. On Bohemia's aristocratic cosmopolitanism see also Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble*, pp. 3, 25.

of nationalities within the borders of the kingdom that puts the Czechs at the top. He takes a position that certainly was not shared by a majority of Czech speakers at the time, but points to tensions that would mark language conflicts throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> At the time even the organisations of German nationalists fully recognised the equality of the two language groups.<sup>49</sup>

Although the anonymous pamphlet firmly rejects the idea that Germans might have contributed to the Slavs' revival, its author does not hesitate publishing his own contribution to the debate in Leipzig, a hotbed of pan-Slavism nurtured by anti-Austrian sentiment within the German Confederation. Moreover, the author's arguments show clear echoes of Herder's *Geschichte der Europäischen Völker* when praising the Slavs' industrious and peaceful nature. These references suggest that the main arguments of Herder's famous '*Slavenkapitel*' had developed a dynamic of their own that was no longer directly associated with the philosopher from Weimar. The author adds to Herder by proposing an argument about the Slavs' spirit of freedom and democracy, an idea present also in Palacký's *Geschichte von Böhmen* and another indicator that his anti-German argument heavily relied on German-language sources.<sup>50</sup>

Despite its aggressive anti-Bohemian and anti-German rhetoric, any specific evidence for policies of assimilation in the pamphlet referred not to examples of German nationalism, but to the fate of the Slovaks in Upper Hungary, demonstrating the widespread awareness of Magyarisation during the 1840s.<sup>51</sup> Two years earlier, in 1843, Thun's cousin Leo had published a short book on the situation of the Slovaks in Hungary.<sup>52</sup> A friend of Alexis de Tocqueville, Leo Thun was prefect

<sup>48</sup> See also J. Křen, *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft. Tschechen und Deutsche 1780–1918* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), p. 82.

<sup>49</sup> F. Palacký, 'Die Prager Ereignisse, bis Anfang Mai 1848' in *Gedenksblätter. Auswahl von Denkschriften, Aufsätzen und Briefen aus den letzten fünfzig Jahren als Beitrag zur Zeitgeschichte* (Prague: Tempsky, 1874), pp. 163–65. *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen der am 28. August 1848 in Teplitz im Namen deutscher Städte, Gemeinden und konstitutioneller Vereine Böhmens zusammengekommenen Vertrauensmänner*, 29 August 1848 (Leitmeritz: Medau, 1848), p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> On Palacký and Herder see Křen, *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft*, p. 82. On diversions from Herder's classical description see M. Baár, *Historians and Nationalism. East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 110, 203. On the idea of the Czechs' 'natural' democratic spirit see also Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints*, p. 5. Thomas G. Masaryk went beyond Herder's *Slavenkapitel* when arguing for the profound impact of the German's philosophy on Palacký's idea of humanity: *Palacký's Idee des Böhmisches Volkes* (Prague: JUC, 1898), p. 22.

<sup>51</sup> On the new wave of Magyarisation starting in 1840 see C. A. Macartney, *Hungary. A Short History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962), p. 148.

<sup>52</sup> L. Graf von Thun, *Die Stellung der Slowaken in Ungarn* (Prague: Calve'sche Buchhandlung, 1843).

(*Kreiskommissar*) in Bohemia, became governor of Bohemia in 1848, and then 'imperial Minister for Culture and Education, with a mission to apply the enlightened principles of Bernard Bolzano'.<sup>53</sup> Leo Thun's small volume contributed to a debate triggered by his earlier book on Bohemian literature, published in 1842.<sup>54</sup> Although he deplores the Germans' lack of interest in the Czech revival,<sup>55</sup> his principal opponents were not aggressive German nationalists in Bohemia, but, again, the advocates of Magyarisation in Hungary, who for their part were fearful that the Czech revival might inspire the Slovaks to assert their natural rights too. Replying to his critics, Thun positioned himself directly against the agitations of Ferenc Pulszky, a fierce proponent of aggressive Magyarisation, who openly denied the Slavonic languages any future in Hungary and was among the first to propose population transfers for minorities unwilling to assimilate.<sup>56</sup>

Czech and Bohemian concern for Hungary's Slavic populations explains why in 1848 the Czechs showed themselves reluctant to support the Hungarian Revolution and tended to sympathise with the Croats and Josip Jelačić's mission to save the empire. While a protagonist of the Czech revival like Palacký retained an affectionate relationship with many Hungarians, the anti-Hungarian attitude of many Czech nationalists opposed them directly to the German supporters of Kossuth, whose backing of the Hungarian Revolution was driven by anti-Austrian sentiments and their hopes to form part of a greater German (*großdeutsch*) nation state. The conflict evoked by the revival of the empire's Slavonic languages points to two very different concepts of

<sup>53</sup> Thienen-Adlerflycht, *Graf Leo Thun im Vormärz*, pp. 141–46, 153, 162. B. Mazohl-Wallnig, 'Der Einfluß Bolzanos und der Bolzanisten auf die österreichische Universitätsreform der Jahre 1848/49' in H. Rumpler (ed.), *Bernard Bolzano und die Politik. Staat, Nation und Religion als Herausforderung für die Philosophie im Kontext von Spätaufklärung, Frühnationalismus und Restauration* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 221–46. For an excellent introduction to Bolzano's philosophy see R. Haller, 'Bolzano und die Österreichische Philosophie' in *Ibid.*, pp. 353–69. In English, W. M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind. An Intellectual History 1848–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 275–81. Having lost his chair in Prague in 1820, at the time when Thun engaged with Bolzano he was still considered highly controversial, see P. Krivský, 'Das Entstehen, die Herausgabe und das Projekt der 2. Ausgabe von Bolzanos Lehrbuch der Religionswissenschaft' in C. Christian (ed.), *Bernard Bolzano. Leben und Wirkung* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), pp. 63–83, 75.

<sup>54</sup> L. Graf von Thun, *Über den gegenwärtigen Zustand der böhmischen Literatur und ihre Bedeutung* (Prague: Kronberger und Řiwnač, 1842).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>56</sup> 'Die böhmische Sprache hat in Ungarn keine Zukunft . . . So glaube ich doch, dass, wenn in einem Slaven in Ungarn das Gefühl seiner česchen Herkunft erwacht . . . dann für ihn nichts übrig bleibe, als mit Palacký und Schaffarik dahinauszuwandern.' 'Ferenc Pulszky to Leo Thun, 2ter Brief. An Graf Leo Thun', 24 March 1842, in Thun, *Die Stellung der Slowaken in Ungarn*, pp. 2–7, 5.

state in Bohemia and Hungary: on the one side, in Bohemia, the idea of a state that includes different ethnic or linguistic groups held together by a sense of loyalty to their ancient kingdom; and, across the border to Hungary, a policy of Magyarisation, based on the belief in the superiority of one ethnic group over a majority of other nationalities. Even in Hungary itself, many members of the political elite were concerned over these developments, a policy the great Hungarian reformer Count István Széchenyi considered 'unchristian and politically unwise'.<sup>57</sup>

Like most supporters of the Czech revival, Leo Thun abstained from translating his enthusiasm for Europe's 7.8 million Slavs into a political and universalist pan-Slavism, describing, instead, the diversity of the monarchy's peoples as the Austrian Empire's greatest asset.<sup>58</sup> It was this idea of empire that Palacký revived and popularised. Palacký was not only the most influential historian of Bohemia and of the Czechs, but also their most prominent political thinker. As in the case of Leo Thun, Palacký's thought was heavily influenced by Bernard Bolzano.<sup>59</sup> As secretary of the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences from 1839 to 1844, editor of Bohemia's principal academic journal, and secretary of the Bohemian National Museum from 1841, Palacký's career demonstrates how already prior to 1848 a proud supporter of the Czech national revival could ascend to the highest ranks of Bohemian society. More than anybody, Palacký contributed to debates on the relationship between German and Czech speakers in Bohemia, and on the kingdom's future relationship with the Austrian Empire.

Since the 1820s Palacký had created the foundations of a modern Bohemian historiography aimed at fostering the historic rights of the Bohemian lands within the Austrian Empire. As the official historiographer of the Bohemian Estates (with a stipend from 1831, officially appointed from 1838), without ever assuming a university position, Palacký enjoyed the support of the mentor of the Czech revival, Josef Dobrovsky, and of the counts Franz and Kaspar Sternberg.<sup>60</sup> His commission resulted in a monumental *History of Bohemia until 1526*, published in five volumes from 1836 to 1867, with the revised Czech edition completed in 1876, just a month before his death.<sup>61</sup> He was the first scholar to use scientific methods of research to reveal the role of the

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Macartney, *Hungary*, p. 148.

<sup>58</sup> Thun, *Über den gegenwärtigen Zustand der böhmischen Literatur*, pp. 66, 72–9, 81. and *Die Stellung der Slowaken in Ungarn*, p. 62.

<sup>59</sup> J. Kofalka, 'František Palacký und die böhmischen Bolzanisten' in Rumpel (ed.), *Bernard Bolzano*, pp. 201–20.

<sup>60</sup> On Kaspar Sternberg in particular, see Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble*, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> Zacek, *Palacký*, pp. 35–9, 60.

Czech and particularly the Hussite elements in Bohemian history. Palacký combined Bohemian *Landespatriotismus* with the spiritual and political leadership of the Czech national movement. Although his ideas were not uncontroversial, he enjoyed a remarkable academic recognition, reflected in the international response to his *History of Bohemia* as well as regular invitations to contribute to encyclopaedias such as the German *Brockhaus*. Although after 1848 his writings in Czech gained more weight, he developed much of his constitutional and historical thought in the period leading to the revolution through publications in German, including the first volumes of the *History of Bohemia*.<sup>62</sup> He continued using German for much of his correspondence, not just with members of the elites, who would have struggled to maintain political and academic exchanges in Czech, but also in thirty-five years of regular correspondence with his wife.

That two linguistic communities constituted Bohemia's political nation was a fact for Palacký; and despite his efforts to advance the use of Czech in public and academic life, he had no intention of extinguishing the use of German in Bohemia or to question the role of German speakers as an inalienable part of the kingdom. Especially in his earlier writings, nation is often discussed as a political concept, referring to a Bohemian nation to include Czech and German speakers. Only after 1848, and when writing in Czech, did *národ* (nation) become an ethnic concept. In the first volume of his *History of Bohemia*, covering the period up to the twelfth century, he distinguished between Slavic and increasingly dominant Germanic influences. They partly retained their original character, and were partly amalgamated into Bohemian elements.<sup>63</sup> Politically most relevant for the context in which he was writing was his depiction of Bohemia as a sovereign and unitary state, including Moravia.<sup>64</sup> The unitary approach to the two distinct crown-lands of Bohemia and Moravia would become a key demand of the Czech national movement in 1848.<sup>65</sup> For Palacký and his huge following among both language communities, fighting for the historical rights of the Bohemian crown within a (reformed) Austrian Empire was perfectly compatible with leading the Czech national movement.

Reflecting his career's connection between historical scholarship and politics, a fundamental element of Palacký's thought was informed by his

<sup>62</sup> On his discovery of the Czech language, see Morava, *Franz Palacký*, p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> F. Palacký, *Geschichte von Böhmen. Größtenteils nach Urkunden und Handschriften*. Band I (Prague: Kronberger und Weber, 1836), IX.

<sup>64</sup> Palacký, *Geschichte von Böhmen*, Band II/1, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> On differences between the national movement in Bohemia and Moravia, M. Řezník, *Formování Moderního Národa* (Prague: Triton, 2003), p. 147.



work on the medieval origins of the Bohemian kingdom. While romantic historicism often drew on mythical origins and ethnic primordialism, Palacký approached the history of Bohemia from the perspective of a constitutional and diplomatic historian, using methodologies only recently established by Savigny and Ranke, based on the collection and philological analysis of archival documents. While the works of the French liberals Guizot and Thierry taught him to think about nations in terms of civilisations, from a methodological point of view Palacký was strongly influenced by Georg Heinrich Pertz, editor of the famous *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.<sup>66</sup> Palacký's interest in document-based historiography is important in the context of debates over his position on the 'discovery' in 1817 and 1818 of manuscripts mistakenly dated to the ninth century and employed to prove the early medieval origins of an independent Czech literary culture.<sup>67</sup> A crucial step in his endeavour to write a document-based history of the Bohemian kingdom was an official archival expedition to Italy, which attracted much public attention in Bohemia and Austria and resulted in a rich collection of documentary evidence on the kingdom's medieval history, including chronicles and papal *regesta* from the Vatican Archives and Libraries, as well as a huge amount of material from Florence, the Ambrosian Library in Milan, as well as the archives and the St Mark's Library in Venice.<sup>68</sup> In the Vatican Archives alone Palacký went through about 45,000 documents. He travelled in an official mission for the Bohemian Estates, with the direct support of the imperial government, including Metternich's famous opponent, Count Kolowrat.

The research Palacký undertook in Italy stood in direct relationship to his work on the second volume of the *History of Bohemia*. Already the first volume had received remarkable international praise, but also criticism. His principal opponent on the German-nationalist side, the above-mentioned Leonhard Knoll, interpreted Palacký's emphasis of the Czech element in Bohemian history as '*Teutschenhaß*' (hatred of Germans), and compared his alleged political intentions to those of O'Connell's Irish repeal movement, accusing the Czechs of wishing to destroy the Habsburg monarchy in favour of a universalist Slavic-Russian state. Knoll profoundly misunderstood Palacký as well as the intentions of those more radical Czechs around Karel Havlíček, who took

<sup>66</sup> Kořalka, *František Palacký*, pp. 181, 184, 237.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148 f, 201 f. Baár, *Historians and Nationalism*, p. 181.

<sup>68</sup> His main motive was to shed light on the period 1198 to 1248. F. Palacký, *Literarische Reise nach Italien im Jahre 1837. Aufsuchung von Quellen der Böhmisches und mährischen Geschichte* (Prague: Kronberger's Witwe und Weber, 1838), p. 4. For a detailed account of his mission see also Kořalka, *František Palacký*, p. 183.

inspiration from comparisons with Ireland, but at no point advocated Bohemia's separation from Vienna.<sup>69</sup> The Austrian authorities did not share Knoll's extremist interpretation of Palacký's intentions and Kaspar Sternberg firmly rejected any of his accusations. Until censorship was lifted in 1848 there were occasionally tensions over Palacký's *History* in government circles, but mostly on religious or theological grounds, which for the Czechs were difficult to separate from issues of nationality. As Palacký himself reported, the censors frequently accepted the justifications he presented in his replies.<sup>70</sup> During his work on volume II of the *History* the head of the Polizei- und Zensurhofstelle in Vienna, Count Sedlnitzky warned Palacký of: 'a spirit of hostility to the ruling religion' – at the time a sensitive issue anywhere in Europe – but also that 'in a state where many nations are united under one sceptre . . . it cannot be allowed that one nationality attack, disparage, or undermine the others'.<sup>71</sup>

The case led to a row with several officials on different levels of the administration, but the changes Palacký had to concede remained relatively minor. During those debates even Metternich lent Palacký support.<sup>72</sup>

As for the German-nationalist tone of some of the criticism he received, Palacký described these as *Knolliaden*, for which there was little space in scholarly debate.<sup>73</sup> When, shortly before the revolution, Palacký travelled across several German states he noticed that this kind of negative propaganda had done little to damage his reputation.<sup>74</sup> Apart from Knoll, another 'teutomanic' opponent of Palacký was the nationalist journalist Franz Schuselka. As early as 1845 he had proclaimed that the Slavonic-speaking population of the Bohemian lands had 'to be absorbed into the German element'.<sup>75</sup> Later in Frankfurt he belonged to the radical democratic Donnersberg group. Like Knoll, Schuselka's polemic against Palacký was fuelled by his vision of a greater Germany to include large chunks of Bohemian, Danish, and Italian territory. Although Knoll eventually received a chair at the University in Vienna, the imperial government would have been the last to support a form of German nationalism that put the future of the *Kaiserstaat* at risk. Palacký was keen to present the first volume of his *History* to Emperor Ferdinand on

<sup>69</sup> Rumpel, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa*, p. 187. On the moderate tone of the Czech repeal movement see Pech, *The Czech Revolution of 1848*, pp. 45, 48.

<sup>70</sup> F. Palacký, 'Zwei Censur-Gutachten (1834.1839)' in *Gedenklblätter*, pp. 103–4.

<sup>71</sup> Zacek, *Palacký*, p. 62, for the quote p. 64. <sup>72</sup> Kořalka, *František Palacký*, p. 231.

<sup>73</sup> Palacký, 'Eine Knolliade' (1844) in *Gedenklblätter*, pp. 129–31.

<sup>74</sup> Kořalka, *František Palacký*, p. 250.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in A. Klíma, *Češi a Němci v revoluci 1848–49* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, 1994), pp. 16, 136.

the occasion of his coronation as king of Bohemia. Unfortunately, it only appeared two months after the occasion. Positive responses to the volume included personal letters received from Ludwig I of Bavaria and Friedrich August II of Saxony. At home the government decided that all higher civil servants in Bohemia should be given free copies of the work, while the imperial family was keen that the archdukes too would be sent their own copies.<sup>76</sup>

A more direct contribution to political thought in Bohemia was a series of talks on the kingdom's constitutional history Palacký gave to the Bohemian estates at the residence of Prince Karl Schwarzenberg.<sup>77</sup> This circle of aristocrats was made up of the same men who financed Palacký's research and his efforts to collect documents on the history of Bohemia. Opposed to imperial interference in the kingdom, the estates were keen to assert the rights granted to them in the constitution of 1627, the so-called '*Verneuerte Landesordnung*'.<sup>78</sup> While some progress in this direction had been made under Leopold II, during the Napoleonic period and under Franz II/I the estates had lost much of their traditional role, a process that undermined the autonomy of the Bohemian lands within the empire. Some of the estates' concerns resembled the situation in Hungary during the reform era; but where Hungary's opposition to Vienna went hand in hand with the increasing suppression of the population's Slavonic-speaking majority, the Bohemian estates received much of their renewed pride from the Czech revival and the idea that the Bohemian nation was constituted by two tribes, Slavic and German. The estates used the arguments brought forward by Palacký in a number of documents and petitions to the central administration. In May 1845 a delegation of the diet headed by Josef Mathias Thun met the emperor and members of the government, without resolving the conflicts. Part of what the estates wanted to achieve was self-rule or *Selbstverwaltung* within the empire: not the empire's abolition but a more immediate role for the diet within the structures of governance, going beyond mere consultation. In many respects these demands resembled the arguments brought forward by local elites elsewhere in the monarchy, including in Lombardy. These tensions notwithstanding, Palacký received generous support from the imperial family for his research. In order to keep the empire's German

<sup>76</sup> Kořalka, *František Palacký*, p. 174. <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>78</sup> On these attempts also R. Melville, *Adel und Revolution in Böhmen. Strukturwandel von Herrschaft und Gesellschaft in Österreich um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz: Zabern, 1998), p. 66. For a recent evaluation of the constitution of 1627 see K. Malý, 'Die Böhmisches Konföderationsakte und die Verneuerte Landesordnung – zwei böhmische Verfassungsgestaltungen zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilung*, 122/1 (2005), 285–300.

element in check, the Habsburgs recognised the need to foster the role of the empire's non-German constituents. In May 1847 the emperor made Palacký a member of the new Imperial Academy of Science.<sup>79</sup>

Palacký's meetings with the estates also resulted in a memorandum in which the historian outlined the challenges to the Bohemian constitution since 1627 and his views on the future role of the aristocracy.<sup>80</sup> For Palacký, the aristocracy had to endorse the modern principle of nationality, understood here as a Bohemian nationality to include German and Czech speakers. The principle of nationality, for Palacký, had emerged from the growing role of public opinion in challenging the centralising tendencies of the absolutist state. Palacký recognised in the aristocracy the 'natural product of any societal order'. As its function within the feudal economy had been superseded by technological advances, it had to use its societal prestige to take the lead in representing the Bohemian nation within the empire. Again, the aim here was not to replace the empire with a new nation state, but to readjust the relationship between the state and public opinion by acknowledging the historic rights of the empire's constituent parts.

As a contribution to the articulation of *Landespatriotismus*, Palacký's memorandum closely followed the principal arguments laid out in his *History of Bohemia*. It distinguished between the region's Slavonic origins up to the thirteenth century – a time when social hierarchies were allegedly unknown – and a period of feudalism up to the seventeenth century. Feudalism was followed by the emergence of the absolutist state as a centralising force, lasting to the time of writing. Palacký did not see these past two hundred years of centralisation as entirely negative. Possibly influenced by the French liberal school, he acknowledged the connection between centralisation and civilisation, but argued that over time these forces had resulted in an excessive restriction of the estates, undermining the character of the state's constituent parts to the point that it provoked public opinion to act against it. As an important new force in world history, public opinion expressed itself through nationality to form a counterweight to centralisation. Therefore it was the aristocracy's new role to embrace the principle of nationality. Part of this struggle was to reach equality between the two tribes that constituted the Bohemian nation.

<sup>79</sup> Kořalka, *František Palacký*, pp. 249, 252.

<sup>80</sup> Palacký, 'Denkschrift über die Veränderungen der böhmischen Landesverfassung (1846)' in *Gedenkbücher*, pp. 135–42. For a commentary see M. Otáhal, 'František Palacký und die tschechischen Liberalen' in Jaworski and Luft (eds.), 1848/49, pp. 47–56. On the constitutional development since the seventeenth century also R. J. W. Evans, 'The Habsburg monarchy and Bohemia, 1526–1848', in Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, pp. 74–98, 85.

Palacký was no friend of revolutions as a driving force of historical change. In a letter of 5 March 1848 he described the events in Paris as a 'great catastrophe'.<sup>81</sup> Therefore he was relieved when the first assemblies in Prague, following the events in Palermo, Paris, and Milan, remained calm and were conducted with a sense of respect for the government as well as a desire to preserve the amicable relationship between the two linguistic communities. Unlike later historians, who usually describe the famous meeting at the Wenzelsbad as the beginning of the Revolution in Prague, Palacký saw the event as being perfectly in line with previous public gatherings at this location.<sup>82</sup> When he interrupted his scholarly work for twelve months in March 1848 it was not to become a politician in the modern sense of the word, but to moderate the process of change, setting out his long-term ideas for the future of the Czech nation within the Bohemian kingdom, the empire, and Europe as a whole.

Despite the moderate nature of Palacký's liberalism, the debate over the Czechs' place within the empire led to tensions with the estates. While they shared Palacký's view that Bohemia could not form part of the new German nation state emerging in Frankfurt, the conflict between Czechs and Germans over the issue increasingly assumed a constitutional significance that affected the liberals' views on political representation. The estates understood the general commotion to mean that Bohemia, represented by its estates, would finally reassert its rights within the empire. For the liberals, however, the promise of a constitution in March 1848 meant that the seventeenth-century statutes were no longer valid. As a consequence, they demanded the election of an assembly representing the people of Bohemia, though not necessarily based on universal suffrage.<sup>83</sup> For Palacký's former supporters around Count Joseph Mathias Thun this interpretation of the events was difficult to accept, showing for the first time a rift between the aristocratic Landespatriotismus of the past decades and the moderate liberalism emerging as a direct consequence of the revolution.

Even more significant for the wider history of the revolution were Palacký's differences with the Frankfurt Parliament.<sup>84</sup> Having received an invitation to join the Committee of Fifty in charge of preparing

<sup>81</sup> Palacký to his wife, 5 March 1848, in F. Palacký, *Briefe an Therese* (Dresden: Thelem, 2003), p. 390.

<sup>82</sup> Palacký to his wife, 13 March 1848, in Palacký, *Briefe an Therese*, p. 392.

<sup>83</sup> F. Palacký, 'Eine verunglückte Erklärung (1848)' in *Gedenklätter*, pp. 147–48. The document of 2 April 1848 outlined the basic principles for the election of an assembly, which Thun refused to sign.

<sup>84</sup> F. Palacký, 'Eine Stimme über Oesterreichs Anschluss an Deutschland (1848)' in *Gedenklätter*, pp. 148–55.

parliamentary elections, the historian used his famous reply of 10 April 1848 to explain why Bohemia could not join the German national movement in transforming the hitherto existing *Fürstenbund* (federation of princes) into a federation of the German people. Palacký rejoiced in the initiative of Germany's national movement to create a nation state and recognised that his invitation revoked previously expressed accusations that his work was directed against the interests of the German nation. Meanwhile, as '*Böhme slawischen Stammes*' (a Bohemian of the Slavonic tribe), he was not German; and for the same reason Bohemia cannot form part of a German nation state.<sup>85</sup> Reiterating the main arguments of his *History*, he explained that while the rulers of Bohemia formed part of the German Federation of Princes, the Bohemian people had always formed an entity apart. The kingdom's connection with the Holy Roman Empire (and with the German Confederation thereafter) did not affect the Bohemian people, because the Holy Roman Emperor had no legislative or judicial powers over Bohemia.<sup>86</sup> Therefore Bohemia could continue to form part of a federation of princes, but not merge with a different people into one nation state. The basis on which the Kingdom of Bohemia formed part of the Austrian Empire was different from relations within the Holy Roman Empire or the emerging German nation state. Modelled on the ancient relationship between the Habsburg possessions, Palacký describes the Austrian Empire as a free community of equal peoples and religions. This viewpoint led him to pronounce his most significant justification of the Austrian Empire, which would remain valid for the rest of the century: the formation of a German nation state to include Austria would fatally weaken a state whose 'survival, integrity and strength' not only serves the Czechs but Europe as a whole. The empire existed in the interest of 'humanity and civilisation'; 'if it didn't already exist, one would have to create it in the interest of Europe and humanity'.<sup>87</sup> For Palacký, Austria's *raison d'être* was to guarantee the natural rights of its peoples, nationalities, and religions, on an equal basis. Instead, Frankfurt's demands would divide the European map into peoples that ruled and those that served ('*herrschende*' and '*dienstbare Völker*').<sup>88</sup> Not Frankfurt, but Vienna has 'the ability and the vocation' to offer his people 'peace, freedom and

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150. For a modern explanation see Wilson, *Heart of Europe*, p. 208.

<sup>87</sup> Palacký, 'Eine Stimme über Oesterreichs', pp. 151–52.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153. In this context it comes as no surprise that he sees an independent Hungary as the natural consequence of Vienna's submission to Frankfurt. But a Hungary that requests all of its peoples to be Magyars first and for all cannot be 'in the interest of humanity'. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

rights'.<sup>89</sup> Palacký put forward exactly the same view at the Prague Slavic Congress in June 1848, leading to significant tensions with delegates of some of the other nationalities.<sup>90</sup>

While it would be problematic to present a politician's letter to a foreign parliamentary committee as evidence for a broader constitutional debate in Bohemia, the attention it received noticeably shaped the discussion over Bohemia's place in the empire. Within two days it was published in full in the *Constitutionelle Blatt für Böhmen*, followed two days later by a Czech translation in Havlíček's *Národní Noviny*.<sup>91</sup> Prague's provisional government, of which Palacký formed part, officially endorsed the letter. Most of the opposition to his position came from radical democratic forces in Germany and from those German nationalists in Austria who had replaced loyalty to the Habsburgs with adherence to the emerging German nation state. Their main argument was that the Czechs did not constitute a nation, that their alleged hatred against Germans was driven by fanatics, and that Bohemia constituted a German land that now had to join the German Empire. In Bohemia, however, the response to the letter was overwhelmingly positive, including among large sections of German speakers and the aristocracy. Statistics from the election to the German parliament, cited above, reflect this mood. In Vienna too Palacký's vision of the empire appealed to supporters of the monarchy, which still represented the huge majority of public opinion. The promise of a constitution had greatly boosted a feeling of allegiance to the *Kaiserstaat*, reflected in countless broadsides and pamphlets published over the following weeks. The fact that the new imperial government under von Pillersdorf offered Palacký the position of minister of education shows the respect he enjoyed in imperial circles, but also the importance attributed to the Czech cause. The main reason why he rejected the offer was the open question of Austria's future relationship to Germany.

Supporters of the Hungarian Revolution, German nationalists included, accused Palacký of allegedly planning a pan-Slavic plot. Meanwhile, after the Prague uprising in June 1848 the radical wing of the Czech national movement also turned against him, arguing that his reactionary attitude had made him into an instrument of the military.<sup>92</sup> Parts of the Bohemian nobility as well started to question the political consequences of Palacký's ideas. After having been kidnapped by radical students, Leo Thun turned against all groups of Czech nationalists,

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>90</sup> For details see Z. Tobolka and V. Zacek (eds.), *Slovanský Sjezd v Praze 1848: Sbirka Dokumentů* (Prague: Slov. Úst., [1952]).

<sup>91</sup> Kořalka, *Palacký*, p. 274. <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.



though this did not protect him from being removed from his position as governor.<sup>93</sup> Despite an increasingly poisonous climate, Palacký knew the large majority of Czech liberals behind him and many delegates of the other groupings in the Reichstag, including numerous German speakers, sympathised with his efforts to save the empire through a new constitutional set-up. In October 1848, within days of the final uprisings in Vienna, Palacký was made an honorary citizen of Prague. At no point did he abandon his faith in the future of a reformed Austrian Empire.

Meanwhile, the context in which he presented his support for the empire changed. Over the summer of 1848 Palacký abandoned his concerns over the ancient rights of the Bohemian crown to invest his energies into the empire's constitutional transformation on the basis of equal rights of all nationalities. It was not the empire's historic crownlands, but its nationalities that were to form the principal basis of a federalist reform. The main forum for his ideas became Austria's new imperial diet. The constitution it drafted reflected many of Palacký's ideas, but before being ratified it was replaced by a constitution granted by the new Emperor Franz Joseph I, marking the end of the revolutionary process and the beginning of Austria's neo-Absolutist era. The revolution's remaining legacy was the recognition of civic rights (in the form of the *Grundrechtspatent*), the emancipation of the peasants, and the recognition of equal rights for the empire's nationalities.<sup>94</sup> This was a greater achievement than most historians of the revolution are prepared to admit. In the case of Piedmont the granting of a constitution from above – with all its democratic limitations – is still celebrated as a great achievement. The Austrian constitution of March 1849 – replacing the document produced by the elected Reichstag and equally limited in its democratic scope – is brandished as an '*oktroyierte Verfassung*'.

The shift in Palacký's political thought was also reflected in his subsequent scholarly work. There had been some disappointment among supporters of the Czech revival that he wrote the first volumes of his *Geschichte von Böhmen* in German, although he had always planned to publish a Czech version at a later stage. When progress on the *History* took longer than planned he decided to anticipate the publication of the first Czech volumes before the last volume of the German version had appeared. Translated by the poet and folklorist Karel Jaromír Erben,

<sup>93</sup> Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble*, p. 212.

<sup>94</sup> On the peasant question see Rumpler, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa*, p. 283; for a less enthusiastic take, see P. Heumos, 'Die Bauernbefreiung in den Böhmisches Ländern 1848. Anmerkungen zu den ökonomischen, sozialen und politischen Verhältnissen der Agrargesellschaft' in Jaworski and Luft (eds.), 1848/49, pp. 221–37.

but with a new introduction, the Czech version of volume one reached Prague book shops in March 1848.<sup>95</sup> There was a noticeable change in the title of the Czech edition. What in German had been the *History of Bohemia* became the *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia* (*Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*). As mentioned earlier, the Czech language makes no distinction between Czech and Bohemian, because there is only one word for both concepts. The new title therefore left a certain ambiguity as to the relationship between Czechs and Germans in Bohemia. Whereas previously the term nation/*národ* was often used in relation to the population of Bohemia as a whole, it now referred to its Slavic population, though without suggesting that German speakers did not belong to the kingdom. In many of his documents and speeches dating from the events of 1848–49 Palacký continued to apply the term ‘nation’ with reference to the Kingdom of Bohemia as a political nation,<sup>96</sup> but in his *History*, *národ* changed from a political into an ethnic concept. Moreover, the work’s new title made an assumption regarding the connection between the two crown-lands of Bohemia and Moravia (and by implication, Silesia), precisely because ethnically there was no difference between the Czechs on both sides of the border. But rather than seeing this move as simply an expansionist concept of ethnic nationalism, it also reflected the old connection between the lands of the Bohemian crown.<sup>97</sup>

After 1850, Palacký switched to writing his *History* in Czech, so that the remaining volumes had to be translated into German. While tensions between Czech and German elements had always been an important (and not entirely negative) element of Palacký’s understanding of Bohemian history, the experience of the revolution motivated him to assign much more immediate significance to the kingdom’s two linguistic groups that had to be reflected in its political and constitutional set-up. This move notwithstanding, for him it remained unthinkable to translate nationalism into demands for a separate Bohemian nation state, cut off from the empire. Asserting the kingdom’s constitutional rights and giving political recognition to its two major linguistic communities in no way challenged the institution of empire. Palacký’s confrontation with Frankfurt and the differences with German nationalists made the need for an Austrian *Kaiserstaat* only more obvious – ‘in the interest of Europe, in the interest of humanity’.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Zacek, *Palacký*, p. 56.

<sup>96</sup> See for instance F. Palacký, ‘Proclamation der Böhmen an die Mährer (1848)’ in *Gedenkbücher*, pp. 156–63.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158. <sup>98</sup> Palacký, ‘Eine Stimme über Oesterreich’, 153.

### III Carlo Cattaneo and Lombardy in 1848

During the summer of 1847 Palacký had returned with his family to Italy. In Milan he became aware of the changing political climate and noticed the strong anti-Austrian sentiment that accompanied the celebrations for the appointment of the new archbishop, who was of Italian origin.<sup>99</sup> In comparison, the opposition of the Bohemian estates and the demands for equal use of Czech and German seemed modest. After Metternich's resignation he expected the situation in Lombardy to calm down and the anti-Austrian sentiment to recede. He was to be proved wrong.

Comparable to Palacký's position in Bohemia, Carlo Cattaneo was among Milan's most influential political theorists, a frequent commentator on international events for a number of widely read periodicals, and a leading protagonist of the 1848 Revolution in Lombardy. A forthright opponent of Piedmontese intervention in Northern Italy, he was proud of his Lombard roots, considering his native region among the culturally most advanced in Europe.<sup>100</sup> When Lombardy was annexed by the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, a decade after the failed revolution and giving way to Italy's political unification, Cattaneo decided to stay in Swiss exile. Reflecting on the prospects of civil progress in Lombardy, Cattaneo considered Northern and Central Europe as well as American political institutions his most important points of reference. Contrary to these countries, he perceived Piedmont as an autocratic monarchy with no tradition of civil society.

Cattaneo's comparative approach to the study of civil society raises questions over the reduction of 1848 to the issue of national revolutions, erupting from a desire to constitute independent national states. There are a number of similarities between Cattaneo's response to the revolution and the political ideas discussed during 1848 in other parts of the Habsburg Empire, notably in Bohemia. This includes Cattaneo's critical attitude to the formation of an Italian nation state at the same time when the empire's Slavonic-speaking populations expressed their fear of being assimilated into the emerging nation states of Germany and Hungary. Moreover, Cattaneo's insistence on the historical grounding of civic identity had parallels in the emphasis on historical state rights and *Landespatritismus* in the empire's other crown-lands. Finally, there is his interest in federal solutions to the transformation of Europe's political map, at a time when the Empire's nationalities discussed Austria's federalisation.

<sup>99</sup> Palacký to his wife, 20 March 1848, in Palacký, *Briefe an Therese*, p. 394.

<sup>100</sup> G. Armani, *Carlo Cattaneo. Il Padre del Federalismo Italiano* (Milan: Garzanti, 1997), p. 84.

Since the 1840s, and especially after the election of Pope Pius IX in 1846, the national idea had gained considerable ground among Italians, but few protagonists of the revolutions were in a position to imagine themselves as forming part of a political nation beyond the relatively loose concept of a confederate league between the Italian states under their then governing rulers. Many of those participating in protests prior to the revolution fought for the recognition of constitutional rights within the existing framework of states and hoped to create new channels of political and economic participation for the rising middle classes, similar to the demands of the middle classes elsewhere in Europe. In the case of Lombardy, these demands were fuelled by economic grievances and tensions with the Austrian authorities. *Albertismo*, the idea of Lombardy's union with Piedmont, had gained ground during the months of crisis leading to the Milanese Revolution, but the reluctance of many revolutionaries to accept submission under Piedmont reflects their long experience of participation in local administration under Habsburg rule, as well as a strong sense of regional identity they did not wish to sacrifice for an uncertain future under the Savoy.

Cattaneo's belief in the regional roots of civic and economic progress was not a purely theoretical position, but reflected his experience of Lombardy's agricultural and commercial development during the Restoration period, sustained through the educational and administrative reforms of the Austrian government.<sup>101</sup> Local elites co-operated with this process while also pushing for greater autonomy from Vienna in the form of self-government. While they rejected the constitutional concept of the Habsburgs' Lombardo-Venetian kingdom, compared to almost all other Italian states after 1814 Austrian rule offered an exceptional level of local participation in public life.<sup>102</sup> Richard Cobden, who met Cattaneo in 1847, commented on some of the Habsburgs' progressive policies in

<sup>101</sup> K. R. Greenfield, *Economics and Liberalism in the Risorgimento: A Study of Nationalism in Lombardy, 1814–1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1964), p. 35; R. Pichler, *Die Wirtschaft der Lombardei als Teil Österreichs: Wirtschaftspolitik, Außenhandel und industrielle Interessen* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1996). For a recent discussion of Greenfield see J. A. Davis, 'A missing encounter: Rosario Romeo's place in international historiography' in S. Bottari (ed.), *Rosario Romeo e Il Risorgimento in Sicilia. Bilancio Storiografico e Prospettive di Ricerca* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002), pp. 15–24, 21 f.

<sup>102</sup> B. Mazohl-Wallnig, *Österreichischer Verwaltungsstaat und Administrative Eliten im Königreich Lombardo-Venetien, 1815–1859* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1993), p. 93; on the concept of monarchy, p. 311. Also M. Meriggi, *Gli Stati Italiani Prima dell'Unità* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), p. 157. More critical as to claims of autonomy is N. Raponi, *Politica e Amministrazione in Lombardia agli Esordi dell'Unità. Il Programma dei Moderati* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1967), p. 9.

Italy.<sup>103</sup> Even Mazzini had to admit that ‘the provinces of the Lombard-Venetian Kingdom are less unhappy and better run than any of the other Italian states. You see some signs of progress that you simply cannot find in the Papal States or elsewhere’.<sup>104</sup> During the 1820s and 1830s the Austrian monarchy’s Italian territories were marked by a noticeable absence of unrest, which cannot be explained by political suppression alone. David Laven might be exaggerating only slightly when arguing that “the black legend” of oppressive Austrian rule was the invention of patriotic propagandists who paid scant regard to reality’.<sup>105</sup> More characteristic for the region than active oppression was the government’s failure to respond to the economic downturn during the second half of the 1840s, resulting in famine, unemployment, and protests in the region’s urban centres. However, despite frustration at Ferdinand’s rule, this criticism was usually not translated into open challenges to authority; and discontent rarely led to open demands for separation from Austria. Self-government or the formation of a federation of Italian states, as discussed by the neo-Guelphs, did not necessarily mean the end of Habsburg rule. A famous myth has it that the first performance of Giuseppe Verdi’s *Nabucco* at Milan’s Teatro alla Scala in 1842, including the so-called chorus of the Hebrew slaves, was understood as a reference to demands for liberation from Habsburg oppression, but this story was invented many decades later, after unification, and no contemporary source of reception from Italy or abroad makes any reference to such nationalist readings of the opera.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> R. Cobden, ‘Milan, 4 June 1847’, in M. Taylor (ed.), *The European Diaries of Richard Cobden, 1846–1849* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1994), p. 137.

<sup>104</sup> G. Mazzini, ‘Pamphlet on the affairs of Italy’, quoted in S. Mastellone, ‘I prodromi del 1848. Mazzini e il dibattito sul tipo di rivoluzione (1843–1847)’ in F. Livorsi (ed.), *Libertà e Stato nel 1848–49. Idee Politiche e Costituzionali* (Milan: Giuffrè, 2001), pp. 57–69, 64.

<sup>105</sup> D. Laven, ‘The age of restoration’ in J. A. Davis (ed.), *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796–1900* (The Short Oxford History of Italy) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 51–73, 59. Also D. Laven, *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs, 1815–1835* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1–26, and D. Laven and L. Parker, ‘Foreign rule? Transnational, national and local perspectives on Venice and Venetia within the ‘multinational’ Empire’, *Modern Italy* 19/1 (2014), 5–19. In particular the situation in the penitentiary system was often exaggerated; Thienen-Adlerflycht, *Graf Leo Thun im Vormärz*, p. 149.

<sup>106</sup> R. Parker, ‘*Arpa d’or dei fatidici vati*’. *The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s* (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 1997). Also M. A. Smart, ‘Liberty on (and off) the barricades: Verdi’s Risorgimento fantasies’ in A. Russell Ascoli and K. von Henneberg (eds.), *Making and Remaking Italy. The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp. 103–18. A. Körner, ‘Oper, Politik und nationale Bewegung. Mythen um das Werk Giuseppe Verdis’ in H. Siegrist and T. Höpel (eds.), *Kunst und Gesellschaft im Modernen Europa* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 2017), pp. 99–110.

Attitudes towards the Austrian administration deteriorated early in 1848, after the Revolution in Palermo and when news of the Revolution in Paris spread through Europe. While several Italian states responded by granting their subjects constitutions, Austria seemed committed to suppressing unrest. Within days of the Revolution in Vienna and Buda, Milan got its own Revolution, which after only five days resulted in the departure of the Austrian troops under the Bohemian field marshal Radetzky.<sup>107</sup> Despite the early success of the revolution, Milan's citizenry remained divided between Gabrio Casati's *Albertisti*, who aimed for Piedmontese intervention, and the War Council under Cattaneo, who vehemently opposed the union with Piedmont.<sup>108</sup> In the countryside, parts of the population remained pro-Austrian, and as late as June 1848 peasants were said to have greeted Austrian troops passing through their villages with 'Viva Radetzky', showing similarities with the attitude of Slavonic-speaking minorities elsewhere in the Empire.<sup>109</sup>

Although Cattaneo had been an outspoken critic of the Habsburg administration in Lombardy since the 1830s, during the months prior to the revolution he warned against an escalation of protests, aware that the militarisation of the conflict would make the movement completely dependent on Piedmont, thereby destroying any hopes for regional reform of the Habsburg government.<sup>110</sup> His opposition to a violent overthrow of Habsburg rule and an alliance with Piedmont led to serious tensions with other sections of the national movement. Once discontent turned into open revolt, Cattaneo became one of the revolution's major strategists, but he was still not prepared to sacrifice the ideals of liberty and self-government for new forms of domination in the form of Lombardy's submission under the Savoy monarchy.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>107</sup> For a brief account of Radetzky's role see A. Sked, *Radetzky. Imperial Victor and Military Genius* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 133–48. On the impact of events in Lombardy on the rest of the monarchy see Rumpler, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa*, p. 289 f.

<sup>108</sup> On these tensions see Meriggi, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto*, p. 332.

<sup>109</sup> A. Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire. Radetzky, the Imperial Army and the Class War, 1848* (London: Longman, 1979), p. 187. C. Dipper, 'Revolutionäre Bewegungen auf dem Lande: Deutschland, Frankreich, Italien' in D. Dowe, H.-G. Haupt, D. Langewiesche (eds.), *Europa 1848. Revolution und Reform* (Bonn: Dietz, 1998), pp. 555–85, 576.

<sup>110</sup> See for instance Cattaneo's position on the tobacco boycott, della Peruta, *Milano nel Risorgimento*, p. 133.

<sup>111</sup> F. Sabetti, *Civilization and Self-Government. The Political Thought of Carlo Cattaneo* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), p. 35. Also M. Thom, 'Unity and confederation in the Italian Risorgimento. The case of Carlo Cattaneo' in S. Berger, M. Donovan and K. Passmore (eds.), *Writing National Histories. Western Europe since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 69–81. J. Steinberg 'Carlo Cattaneo and the Swiss idea of liberty' in Bayly and Biagini (eds.), *Giuseppe Mazzini*, pp. 211–35. For a study of Cattaneo's political thought in transnational perspective, also see A. Körner, *America in Italy*.

Cattaneo was not alone in opposing Lombardy's union with Piedmont. When the provisional government organised a plebiscite to this effect, republicans (including Mazzini) protested with an open letter to the *Giornale Ufficiale*.<sup>112</sup> Looking back at the events after the revolution's defeat, Cattaneo recognised that it was the war against Austria that had caused the liberals to abandon their constitutional principles. Suddenly, 'the war seemed to dominate all their thinking. They saw reactionaries and barbarians only in Austria, without noticing reactionaries and barbarians here in Italy', by which he meant Piedmont.<sup>113</sup> His critical attitude towards Piedmont shows that Italian nationalism was less of a driving force behind Cattaneo's political thought than his keen interest in political representation, constitutional rights, and self-government, which for Cattaneo had to be realised within historically constituted political units not dissimilar to the 'small-state republicanism' outlined in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. His emphasis on the connection between republicanism and self-government distinguished Cattaneo's political thought from the moderates' emerging concept of representative government.<sup>114</sup>

In the context of a history of political thought in 1848 perhaps the most surprising aspect of Cattaneo's ideas was the fact that he considered his vision of civil society compatible with the imperial setting and the administrative tradition of a reformed Habsburg monarchy. Not unlike Palacký, he described Austria as 'a cosmopolitan entity' that allowed its peoples to live within the empire 'according to their own traditions'.<sup>115</sup> As a student of Austrian civil law, he was intimately familiar with the Habsburg administrative system. Like Giovan Pietro Vieusseux, the publisher of the influential Florentine periodical *Antologia*, Cattaneo had long believed in the possibility of Austria assuming a liberal and modernising role in Northern Italy.<sup>116</sup> As a consequence, much of his

*The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763–1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 121–38.

<sup>112</sup> *Giornale Ufficiale*, 21 May 1848, quoted in *Le Assemblee del Risorgimento*, vol. I, pp. 200–2.

<sup>113</sup> C. Cattaneo, 'Dell'insurrezione di Milano nel 1848 e della successiva guerra. Memorie' in Cattaneo, *Il 1848 in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), 11–283, 144.

<sup>114</sup> Ideas of political representation among the Piedmontese moderates mostly emerged after 1848; M. Isabella, 'Aristocratic liberalism and Risorgimento: Cesare Balbo and Piedmontese political thought after 1848', *History of European Ideas* 39/6 (2013), 835–57; R. Romani, 'Reluctant revolutionaries: Moderate liberalism in the kingdom of Sardinia, 1849–1859', *The Historical Journal* 55/1 (2012), 45–73. Also M. Meriggi, 'Liberali / Liberalismo' in A. M. Banti et al (eds.), *Atlante Culturale del Risorgimento. Lessico del Linguaggio Politico dal Settecento all'Unità* (Rome/Bari: Laterza, 2011), pp. 101–14.

<sup>115</sup> Cattaneo, 'Dell'insurrezione di Milano', pp. 20 and 38.

<sup>116</sup> E. Sestan, *La Firenze di Vieusseux e di Caponi* (Florence: Olschki, 1986), p. 19.



journalistic and political activity prior to 1848 concentrated on the rights of an independent Lombardy within the empire.<sup>117</sup> When in 1848 Cattaneo began to openly denounce the Viennese system of government, he still identified the problems in Milan as a temporary moment of crisis, insisting that the current climate did not question in principle the Habsburgs' tradition of imperial rule.

Cattaneo's interest in the reform of the Habsburg administration is perhaps best explained by his negative assessment of the prospects for Lombardy's possible convergence with the other states of the Italian peninsula. Compared to the legacies of enlightened absolutism in the Habsburg monarchy he considered Piedmont autocratic and backward. Faced with the possibility of Lombardy's imminent annexation by Piedmont, he emphasised the extent to which a centralised monarchy contradicted Italy's own historical experiences. He wrote in the aftermath of Milan's failed insurrection:

every institution in Italy has had republican roots for three thousand years. Crowns never brought any glory. Rome, Etruria, Magna Grecia, the League of Pontida, Venice, Genoa, Amalfi, Pisa, Florence acquired all glory and power on the basis of Republican rule<sup>118</sup>

Like Sismondi, Cattaneo took the view that republicanism best reflected Italy's civic traditions, recognising in its medieval and early modern republics a past that could be explored for the country's constitutional future.<sup>119</sup> The main target of Cattaneo's republicanism, however, became Piedmont's expansionist ambition. While the House of Savoy constituted Europe's longest reigning dynasty, Piedmont shared little with the peninsula's constitutional history, leading Cattaneo to suggest that a federal Italy did not need Piedmont: 'without Piedmont it will still count 20 million people. There is no need for Piedmont.'<sup>120</sup>

In his appreciation of Austrian principles of multinational rule Cattaneo was not alone. The Sicilian patriot Gioacchino Ventura praised the legal tradition of Habsburg rule in similar terms:

What forms the Austrian Empire's strength? Perhaps the fact that it counts some twenty million inhabitants? No. It is the fact that these are organised into five or six

<sup>117</sup> Thom, 'Unity and confederation in the Italian Risorgimento', 71. Armani, *Carlo Cattaneo*, 23, 42–6, 60. Compare also Metternich's view on the future role of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom: Siemann, *Metternich*, p. 615.

<sup>118</sup> Cattaneo, 'Dell'insurrezione di Milano', 103.

<sup>119</sup> A. Lyttelton, 'Sismondi, the republic and liberty: between Italy and England, the city and the nation', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17/2 (2012), 167–82.

<sup>120</sup> Cattaneo, 'Dell'insurrezione di Milano', 281.

separate peoples with different Kingdoms, their own institutions, laws, their own governments, that they are united under one sceptre only in a political sense.<sup>121</sup>

In the context of the Italian Revolutions of 1848 it seems remarkable to find some of Italy's most prolific supporters of the revolution praising the Austrian model. The economist and statesman Stefano Jacini went so far as to call Maria Theresa's 1755 reform of the local administration Lombardy's Magna Carta. After Napoleon's defeat Franz I revived the same principles of governance almost without any changes.<sup>122</sup> Cattaneo's criticism of Piedmont was shared by different fractions of Italy's revolutionary movement. Carlo Pisacane was convinced that Piedmont's suppression of free thought was worse than the situation in Austria.<sup>123</sup> Also Giuseppe Ferrari, in an article for the *Revue Indépendante* of January 1848, argued that Piedmont was more reactionary than Austrian-ruled Lombardy.<sup>124</sup> Several years earlier, in an article for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he had used similar terms to target the reactionary ideology behind Piedmont's aristocratic liberalism.<sup>125</sup>

What aroused Cattaneo's interest in the Austrian monarchy was not only the tradition of local participation in government, but the concept of a federal alternative to centralised nation states. When looking for possibilities of reforming the Austrian system of government according to federal principles, Cattaneo rediscovered the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire: 'Within its borders all Christian peoples counted as equal, as they did within the Church and within the heraldic brotherhood of the Crusades.'<sup>126</sup> Cattaneo's interest in the Holy Roman Empire as a federal model reflected a tradition of legal thought going back to Montesquieu, Benjamin Franklin, and the legal historians of the

<sup>121</sup> G. Ventura, *La Questione Sicula nel 1848 Sciolta nel vero Interesse della Sicilia, di Napoli e dell'Italia* (Rome: Zampi, 1848), p. 37. On Ventura see E. Guccione, 'Il costituzionalismo in Sicilia nel 1848' in Livorsi (ed.), *Libertà e Stato nel 1848–49*, pp. 179–98, 186.

<sup>122</sup> N. Raponi, *Politica e Amministrazione in Lombardia agli esordi dell'Unità. Il Programma dei Moderati* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1967), p. 36. Based on the works of Franco Valsecchi and Carlo Capra, Cristof Dipper argues for the crucial role of Viennese administrators in the interaction between Lombard Enlightenment and administrative reforms, C. Dipper, 'Die Mailänder Aufklärung und der Reformstaat. Ein Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publikums über das Verhältnis der politischen Theorie zum administrativen Handeln' in F. Jung and T. Kroll (eds.), *Italien in Europa. Die Zirkulation der Ideen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Paderborn: Fink, 2014), pp. 15–36.

<sup>123</sup> C. Pisacane, *Guerra combattuta in Italia negli anni 1848–49. Narrazione* (Genoa: Pavese Editore, 1851), p. 184. N. Rosselli, *Carlo Pisacane nel Risorgimento Italiano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), p. 53.

<sup>124</sup> G. Ferrari, 'La révolution et les réformes en Italie' in *Revue Indépendante*, XIII, 10 January 1848, 85–119.

<sup>125</sup> Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, vol. II, p. 385.

<sup>126</sup> Cattaneo, 'Dell'insurrezione di Milano', 282.

Göttingen School.<sup>127</sup> Jacques-Vincent de la Croix, an early commentator on the American constitution, described the German constitution as ‘the most essential example to follow in every one of its aspects, because it is the centre around which the interests of all the principal states of Europe gravitate’.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, when Cattaneo looked at the Holy Roman Empire as a model for the reorganisation of Lombardy’s position within the Austrian Empire, he consulted the same sources that had influenced the fathers of the American constitution several decades earlier. Francesco Saverio Salfi, writing in 1821, had taken the German Confederation as a model for the federalisation of Italy. In Salfi’s view, by preserving its present sovereigns, the imperial model presented the advantage of a much looser structure compared to the United States or the Swiss constitutions.<sup>129</sup>

On 17 March 1848 Cattaneo received news of the uprisings in Vienna, one day before Revolution broke out in Milan. That night Cattaneo still set his hopes on a federal transformation of the Empire, writing an article – never published – advocating a free Lombardy within the structures of a federal Austria, an idea very close to the concepts discussed in Pest and Prague.<sup>130</sup> Only the events of the following days moved Cattaneo to reconsider the future of Lombardy as part of an Italian Federal Republic, but with a clear vote against a monarchical solution or the annexation by Piedmont. The course the revolution then took was diametrically opposed to Cattaneo’s ideas. He was not prepared to follow the Milanese *Albertini* in seeking an alliance with Piedmont and declined nominations to the Piedmontese Parliament or the Constituent Assembly in Tuscany. He also rejected an offer to become minister of finance in Mazzini’s Roman Republic. According to his deep-seated federalist convictions, political office had to emerge out of local civic experience, which made any political engagement in cities as far afield as Florence or Rome impossible.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> J. Overhoff, ‘Benjamin Franklin, student of the Holy Roman Empire: his summer journey to Germany in 1766 and his interest in the empire’s federal constitution’, *German Studies Review*, 34/2 (2011), 277–86.

<sup>128</sup> J.-V. de la Croix [Delacroix], *Constitutions des Principaux États de l’Europe et des États-Unis de l’Amérique*, 4 vols. (Paris: Buisson, 1791–2), vol. I, p. 89.

<sup>129</sup> On Salfi see E. Morelli, ‘The United States constitution viewed by nineteenth-century Italian democrats’ in Noether (ed.), *The American Constitution*, pp. 99–118, 101.

<sup>130</sup> The piece was to form part of the programme for a new newspaper, *Il Cisalpino*. Della Peruta, *Milano nel Risorgimento*, p. 167. See also Thom, ‘Unity and confederation in the Italian Risorgimento’, 71 and A. Gili, *Carlo Cattaneo (1801–1869): Un ‘Italiano Svizzero’* (Castagnola: Casa Carlo Cattaneo, 2001), p. 81.

<sup>131</sup> Armani, *Carlo Cattaneo*, p. 33 f. On Cattaneo’s differences with Mazzini see also Sabetti, *Civilization and Self-Government*, p. 6.

The distinction between representative- and self-government had been central to de Tocqueville's analysis of American democracy. In order to develop his idea of federal self-government the United States offered Cattaneo an important point of reference. Among his most detailed discussions of the United States is his essay 'Di alcuni Stati Moderni', published in 1842 in *Il Politecnico*.<sup>132</sup> While full of admiration for the phenomenal economic and technological development of the United States, he is also aware of the country's very specific conditions, where immigration offered the opportunity for continuous economic expansion. Cattaneo shared de Tocqueville's belief in the relationship between political institutions and cultural-historical traditions. A shared vision of civic traditions – rather than nationality or common language – formed the basis of political community. For Cattaneo, the United States had to split from the British motherland (with whom it shared a language) due to a different understanding of public affairs. The fathers of the American Republic formed a federation between the secessionist states on the basis of their common understanding of economic and political values. Therefore, the political nation, not language or ethnicity, was at the origin of American statehood. 'Whatever the commonality of thoughts and feelings a language creates between families and communities, a parliament united in London will never satisfy America.'<sup>133</sup> This insight had clear implications for his understanding of the Italian peninsula:

Laws discussed in Naples will never resuscitate neighbouring Sicily . . . This is the reason why there is a federal law, or the law of peoples, which stands alongside the laws of the nation and the laws of mankind.<sup>134</sup>

Placing Cattaneo's thought on American political institutions within the wider context of his writings on Lombardy and the Habsburgs, he makes an argument against centralised (as opposed to federalised) empires, advocating federal structures on the basis of convergent political and cultural values. In an attempt to connect his Italian experiences to his understanding of American political institutions, he retains the idea of diversity among members of the same federation, leading Giuseppe Armani to describe Cattaneo's federalism as '*policentrismo culturale*', rooted in a concept of progress based on the diversity of experiences,

<sup>132</sup> C. Cattaneo, 'Di alcuni stati moderni' (1842), in G. Salvemini and E. Sestan (eds.) *Scritti Storici e Geografici*, 3 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1957), vol. I, pp. 255–301. Another important piece on the United States and the issue of federalism is C. Cattaneo, 'Notizia sulla questione delle tariffe daziarie negli Stati Uniti d'America desunta da documenti ufficiali' (1833), in A. Bertolino (ed.) *Scritti economici*, 3 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1956), vol. I, pp. 11–55.

<sup>133</sup> C. Cattaneo, 'Il numero e la volontà', in *Stati Uniti d'Italia*, 141–161, 149, 159.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

which in turn generate innovation in culture, science, technology, and social organisation.<sup>135</sup> As Cattaneo concluded in an essay of 1844 for *Politecnico*:

a people is more civilised the more numerous the principles it incorporates . . . Its history is the eternal contrast between diverse principles, which the nation tends to absorb and unify.<sup>136</sup>

The defeat of the revolution and the advent of neo-absolutism under Emperor Franz Joseph I took the idea of a reformed Austrian Empire off the table and obliged Cattaneo to reconsider federalism as a structure for the Italian states. As outlined in the *Corollarii* of his book on 1848, the future freedom of Italy was to depend on a federation of independent states, each of which had to guarantee civic rights to its people. The Napoleonic period had shown that unification and centralisation undermined freedom, defined as more than the absence of foreign interference in Italy's internal affairs. The sovereignty and freedom of Italy's individual states, understood as a cluster of 'political families', were now to form the basis of national independence.<sup>137</sup>

Throughout his life, comments on American political institutions constituted a crucial point of reference for Cattaneo's federalism (and for federalism as a condition of political liberty), but without offering much in terms of detail about how these institutions work. Passing references to the United States in his analysis of 1848 illustrate this point: 'Each Italian state has to remain sovereign and free in its own right. . . . This is what the wisdom of America teaches us.'<sup>138</sup>

According to Filippo Sabetti the main aim of these references to the United States was to show that there existed an alternative to the European model of the unitary state; to provide empirical evidence that society can govern itself; and to propagate a new political science focused on society's institutions of self-government.<sup>139</sup> References to the United States also helped Cattaneo to assess his experience of the war against Austria, in which Lombardy handed itself over to the king of Piedmont, a state that 'had a stronger intention to suppress peoples than to free them'.<sup>140</sup> For Cattaneo, the inclination of the Milanese elites towards the Piedmontese monarchy shows the limitations of their understanding of freedom. Fearful of republican radicalisation and popular sovereignty,

<sup>135</sup> Armani, *Carlo Cattaneo*, p. 70.

<sup>136</sup> Cattaneo, 'Considerazioni sul principio della filosofia', in N. Bobbio (ed.) *Scritti Filosofici* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1960), vol. I, pp. 143–70, 157.

<sup>137</sup> Cattaneo, 'Dell'insurrezione di Milano', 271. <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Sabetti, 'Cattaneo e il modello americano', 346, also 350.

<sup>140</sup> Cattaneo, 'Dell'insurrezione di Milano', 198.

the Revolution in Milan had surrendered to monarchical absolutism only to then be crushed by Austrian troops.<sup>141</sup>

Compared to the United States, Switzerland was much closer to Italy's civic tradition, constituting the example most frequently quoted in Cattaneo's writings. He had visited the country for the first time aged twenty and also translated a German history of Switzerland into Italian.<sup>142</sup> Cattaneo's critical stance towards Piedmont was reciprocated in the cantons ever since in 1834 European refugees in Geneva, supported by the local population, had attempted to cross the border into Savoy to start off a European revolution.<sup>143</sup> Later, as a consequence of his long exile in Lugano, Cattaneo acquired excellent insights into Switzerland's civic institutions and the country's constitution.<sup>144</sup> What he gained from these insights was the idea of self-governing independent cities, quite different from a federalism of regions or territorial states.<sup>145</sup> Apart from Switzerland, Cattaneo's federalism also reflected the emphasis on municipal traditions among certain French historians, in particular Auguste Thierry, who also influenced Palacký. For Thierry, France's ancient Gallo-Roman cities, rebelling against the feudal structures around them, were the heroic ancestors of the Third Estate that came to life during the French Revolution.<sup>146</sup> For Thierry they played a role comparable to Palacký's idealised description of Bohemia's early Slavs. Meanwhile, where Palacký demanded further integration between the relatively large lands of the Bohemian crown, Cattaneo favoured political representation based on small administrative units. Here he seems to have followed the constitutional thought of the Piedmontese historian Carlo Botta. Cautioning his readers that Lombardy would be too big to form a centralised political unit, Botta offered the historic examples of Lucca or San Marino to argue that the

<sup>141</sup> The context explains Cattaneo's later request for a national army based on conscription, following the Swiss or American models: C. Cattaneo, 'Prefazione', *Il Politecnico. Repertorio mensile di studj applicati alla prosperità e coltura sociale*, IX (1860), 5–24, 7.

<sup>142</sup> Armani, *Carlo Cattaneo*, 13, 28, 30. C. Moos, 'Cattaneo e il modello elvetico', in Colombo, della Peruta and Lacaito (eds.), *Carlo Cattaneo*, 325–44.

<sup>143</sup> F. Walter, *Histoire de la Suisse*, vol. IV, *La Création de la Suisse Moderne (1830–1930)* (Neuchâtel: Alphil-Presses Universitaires Suisses, 2011), 37.

<sup>144</sup> Sabetti, *Civilization and Self-Government*, p. 158. On Cattaneo's Swiss connections see in particular Gili, *Carlo Cattaneo*. Armani, *Carlo Cattaneo*, p. 128.

<sup>145</sup> Bobbio, 'Introduzione', 37. Martin Thom, 'City, region and nation: Carlo Cattaneo and the making of Italy', *Citizenship Studies*, 3/2 (1999), 187–201.

<sup>146</sup> Thom, 'Unity and confederation in the Italian Risorgimento', 73. Similar ideas were reflected in the works of Alessandro Manzoni, who had met Thierry in Paris and applied some of his theories to his writings on the relationship between Lombard and Italian history.

unit of government had to be small.<sup>147</sup> Likewise, in his contributions to the debate on the railway connecting Milan and Venice, Cattaneo argued that the point of projecting railways was not to build the most direct connections, but to take account of a region's historical development, its web of urban centres and their respective economic activities.<sup>148</sup> Instead of direct tracks between Milan and Venice, for Cattaneo the project had to connect the cities of Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, and Padua. Passengers moving between these urban centres were to constitute the basis for securing revenue. The aim of railway development was not to build prestigious fast lines, but to take account of civil society's spatial development.

Cattaneo's federalism continued to animate debate among Italian Democrats for decades. One of his most influential commentators, Alberto Mario, opined that federalism was not antithetical to political unity: 'everything that is federal in Switzerland and America constitutes political unity.'<sup>149</sup> Contrary to Cattaneo, however, for Mario federalism did not mean 'the federation of governments, as in ancient Germany', but 'the federation of peoples.'<sup>150</sup> What we find here is Mario's belated attempt to reconcile Cattaneo's legacy with Mazzini's political thought.<sup>151</sup>

#### IV Empires against Nation States

Czech nationalism offers the example of a movement that grew wary of assimilation into a German nation state, but resisted any temptation of fighting for its own separate nation state. Clashing with the Frankfurt Parliament over attempts to incorporate the Bohemian lands into an emerging German Reich, the Czech national movement was keen to strengthen the Czech element in Bohemia's public life and otherwise to preserve the Habsburg Empire as a multinational alternative to a Europe of nation states. Despite growing tensions with sections of Bohemia's German-speaking population, at no point in 1848 did the Czech national movement turn against the principle of Habsburg rule. The case of Lombardy is slightly different in so far as resentment over Habsburg rule was ripe in 1848. Meanwhile, many revolutionaries rejected the

<sup>147</sup> C. Botta, 'Proposizione ai Lombardi di una maniera di Governo Libero', in *Saitta, Alle Origini del Risorgimento*, vol. I, 3–171, 71.

<sup>148</sup> Armani, *Carlo Cattaneo*, p. 56.

<sup>149</sup> A. Mario, 'La Nostra Via' (1872), in P. L. Bagatin (ed.) *La Repubblica e l'ideale. Antologia degli Scritti* (Lendinara: Tipografia Litografia Lendinarese, 1984), 85–87.

<sup>150</sup> Mario, 'Cattaneo', *Ibid.*, 87–101.

<sup>151</sup> Mario, 'Mazzini and Cattaneo' (1880), *Ibid.*, 76–79.



idea of being absorbed by Piedmont, a state widely considered as even more reactionary than Austria. When federal solutions to the Italian question became increasingly unlikely, Cattaneo, the most famous protagonist of Milan's *Cinque Giornate*, preferred staying in Swiss exile to domination under the Savoy. Both examples illustrate the range of political thought in Habsburg Europe during the Revolutions of 1848, but they also point to the fact that the springtime of peoples did not necessarily mean advocating the formation of nation states.

## 16 The Political Thought of a New Constitutional Monarchy

### Piedmont after 1848

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*Maurizio Isabella*

#### I Introduction

The biennium of 1848–49 represented a watershed for the Italian *Risorgimento*. The end of the revolutionary wave marked the definitive defeat of the republicans across the peninsula, the repeal of all constitutions, and the return to absolute government, with one sole exception: the Piedmontese *Statuto Albertino* was to remain the only constitution in place in the Italian peninsula after the revolutionary upheavals had ended. Partially inspired by the French constitution of 1830, it was a short document that introduced a *Senato* appointed by the monarch, a *Camera dei Deputati* elected by those who met a set of strict property qualifications, and the distribution of the legislative power between the two chambers and the king.

The Italian revolutions had been preceded in 1847 by a wave of spontaneous reforms – most notably freedom of the press – inaugurated by the newly elected Pope Pius IX in the Papal state, followed by the other monarchs, supported by the local elites and welcomed unanimously by public opinion across the peninsula. In spite of this moderate and consensual origin, the revolutions nonetheless turned out to be traumatic experiences and new points of departure for its political life. In the face of popular unrest, triggered by the economic crisis, in early 1848 constitutions introducing representative government were granted by the kings to pre-empt further disorders. But things soon span out of control in some states. Monarchical authority was temporarily overthrown in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, in Venice, and in Rome, where radicals gained the upper hand and proclaimed republican or democratic governments. In addition, the peninsula experienced war and foreign military occupation: the revolutions coincided with a war of national liberation against Austria, led by the king of Piedmont and temporarily supported by the pope and the other monarchs, which ended in defeat in 1849, but also with French and Austrian military intervention to crush the republican

experiments led by Giuseppe Mazzini in Rome and by Daniele Manin in Venice respectively.<sup>1</sup>

In Piedmont monarchical authority had remained unchallenged in 1848.<sup>2</sup> Although Charles Albert's military campaigns ended in defeat and in his abdication, the capital of the kingdom, Turin, became a political and intellectual pole of attraction after 1848. From 1849 Piedmont was the only country in the Italian peninsula to retain a constitution and freedom of the press, and the prestige of its monarchy grew. Thinkers and publicists, including thousands of exiles from the other Italian states, settled in Turin and rallied to the new political order, often abandoning earlier republican ideals. Freedom of thought fostered an unprecedented debate about the benefits of representative government, and about the prospects for relaunching the *Risorgimento* of Italy.<sup>3</sup> Thus 1848 represented not only a political, but also an intellectual watershed.

This chapter explores the political thought of the new constitutional regime from the perspective of two prominent *Risorgimento* intellectuals and Piedmontese politicians: Cesare Balbo (1789–1853) and Vincenzo Gioberti (1801–52). Both Balbo and Gioberti had been among the most famous Italian public intellectuals even before 1848, when they emerged as leaders of the so-called moderate party. This group of influential writers was committed to finding a political and intellectual compromise between revolution and reaction and was intent upon gaining the support of the existing rulers to a programme of gradual reforms. A priest from a very modest social background, Gioberti published the most successful best-sellers of the period and the semi-official manifesto of Italian moderates, *Del primato morale e civile d'Italia* (1843), which sold more than 40,000 copies. A former Mazzinian who had spent some months behind bars in 1833, he moved to the right during the 1840s and abandoned his earlier republican beliefs. His extensive and unwieldy treatise put forward an idea of Italian *Risorgimento* as a movement for reform led by the pope, whose moral legitimacy lay in his being the leader of both universal Catholicism and the Italian nation, and advocated the creation of a federation of the existing Italian monarchies under his presidency. In 1844, in the guise of his *Delle Speranze d'Italia*, Cesare

<sup>1</sup> On these events see D. Beales and E. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (London: Longman, 2002); E. Francia, *1848. La Rivoluzione del Risorgimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> U. Levra (ed.), *Il Piemonte alle Soglie del 1848* (Turin: Carocci, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> E. de Fort, 'Esuli in Piemonte nel Risorgimento. Riflessioni su di una fonte', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, CXV (2003), 648–88; E. de Fort, 'Esuli, migranti, vagabondi nello Stato sardo dopo il Quarantotto' in M. L. Betri (ed.), *Rileggere l'Ottocento. Risorgimento e Nazione* (Turin: Carocci, 2010), pp. 227–50.

Balbo published a direct riposte to Gioberti's *Primato*, which earned him nationwide fame. A Piedmontese aristocrat and the son of a former Napoleonic prefect, Balbo rejected the idea of papal leadership. Instead he conceived the *Risorgimento* as a movement led by the Savoyard dynasty and concerned primarily with securing the independence of the peninsula against foreign (i.e. Austrian) rule through war. In spite of these differences, Balbo and Gioberti shared a set of key political beliefs, and their writings helped to shape the pre-1848 agenda and the idea of Italy's *Risorgimento* advanced by the so-called moderate party.

First of all, they shared an idea of progress sustained by the analytical tools of political economy, one serving to justify social inequalities as well as social amelioration, the entire process being based, in their judgement, on a set of natural laws. Their unstinting support for the creation of a customs union among the Italian states based on free trade was one of the key elements on their political agenda.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, their moderate liberalism was Catholic in nature: they were convinced of the intimate connection between the rise of Christianity, civilisation, and progress; believed in a specifically Christian contribution to freedom and the cardinal importance of Catholic morality for the body politic; and were committed to defending the political independence of the papacy.<sup>5</sup> Finally, they considered the *Risorgimento* primarily as a movement grounded in public opinion that would have to unite the elites of the Italian states with the existing monarchs in a process of gradual administrative reform. In fact, up until 1848, when it became clear that this was the most effective bulwark against further revolutionary aspirations, most Italian moderates, both inside and outside Piedmont, advocated the introduction of consultative bodies, administrative reforms, or local representation, rather than elected parliaments.<sup>6</sup>

With the introduction of the constitution, Balbo and Gioberti went on to play a central role in Piedmontese political life. Balbo was the first constitutional prime minister of Piedmont in January 1848, and Gioberti was appointed to the premiership in December 1848 until February 1849. At the same time, they continued to exert influence

<sup>4</sup> R. Romani, 'L'economia politica dei moderati 1830–1848', *Società e Storia* 29 (2006), 21–49; R. Romani, 'The Cobdenian moment in the Italian Risorgimento' in A. Howe and S. Morgan (eds.), *Rethinking Nineteenth-century Liberalism. Richard Cobden Bicentenary Essays* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 117–40.

<sup>5</sup> G. de Rosa and F. Traniello (eds.), *Cesare Balbo alle Origini del Cattolicesimo Liberale* (Rome: Bari, 1996). For the only comprehensive biography of Balbo in this vein see C. Scaglia, *Cesare Balbo. Il Risorgimento nella Prospettiva Storica del 'Progresso Cristiano'* (Rome: Studium, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> L. Mannori, 'Il dibattito istituzionale in Italia al tornante degli anni Quaranta'; in Betri, *Rileggere l'Ottocento*, pp. 63–76.

as public intellectuals. Their writings after 1848 cast light on the intellectual consequences of the revolution and more broadly on the impact that the introduction of the constitution had on Piedmontese and European political thought. Central to their reflection was the belief that 1848 had demonstrated the seemingly unstoppable democratisation of European societies, understood as a gradual equalisation of manners and habits that had played a crucial role in the onset of revolutions. Engaging in a dialogue with, among others, Tocqueville and Guizot, their constitutional thought attempted to take stock of such transformations, which they defined as 'democratic tendencies'. However, their responses to such social transformations diverged, and resulted in conflicting views about how institutions should take account of democratic developments. Their views also reflected broader political distinctions between the supporters of the constitutional monarchy in Piedmont and the members of its parliament, and represented particularly sophisticated versions of such divergent views. Balbo, who represented the right wing of the constitutional spectrum, went on to highlight the importance of an aristocratic element to stabilise the new constitutional system, while Gioberti, flanked by Piedmontese left-wing liberals, argued that the constitution laid the ground for the consolidation of a new democratic monarchy. As the titles of their major post-1848 works analysed below suggest, Gioberti's *Del Rinnovamento Civile d'Italia* (1851) and Balbo's *Della Monarchia Costituzionale d'Italia* (1857) tell us more broadly about the lessons that might be learned from the events of 1848 in Italy and Europe not simply in order to establish a viable representative system in Piedmont, but also to relaunch the *Risorgimento* of Italy after the military defeats of 1848 and 1849, a movement which they both agreed had to be led by the Piedmontese monarchy.

## **II A New Elite Sustains the Constitutional Order: Cesare Balbo and the Aristocratic Origins of Freedom**

The most prominent members of the liberal political and intellectual elite after 1848 belonged to the country's aristocracy. Cesare Balbo was not the only aristocrat to be at the same time a member of the ruling class of constitutional Piedmont and one of a number of intellectuals concerned with defining the nature of the new representative regime. This group included, among others: Federico Sclopis (1798–1878), minister of justice in Balbo's cabinet, directly involved in the administrative and legal reforms of the kingdom prior to 1848 and partly responsible in 1848 for drafting the constitution; Carlo Bon-Compagni (1804–80), minister of education in the first constitutional government; Domenico

Carutti (1821–1909), who worked in the Piedmontese Foreign Office from 1849 onwards; the prominent moderate politician Massimo d’Azeglio (1798–1866); and, perhaps most famously of all, Camillo Cavour (1810–61). This should not come as a surprise. Unlike other Italian nobilities, the Piedmontese ruling caste had a long tradition of service to the state and loyalty to the crown, one that between 1815 and 1848 determined its virtual monopoly of civil service and army posts.<sup>7</sup>

In some of his pre-1848 essays, Cesare Balbo had extolled the virtues of monarchical patriotism as a venerable tradition binding the aristocracy to the Savoyard dynasty. Celebrating the virtues of the Piedmontese nobility, Balbo had claimed that serving the patria and the army ‘is a natural condition of the noble Piedmontese families’.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, taking his cue from Chateaubriand, he made an explicit reference to Montesquieu as the first author to have grasped that a monarchy could not survive without the support of a powerful aristocracy, an aristocracy with real authority and not simply endowed privileges.<sup>9</sup> Against Montesquieu, and again like Chateaubriand, Balbo stressed the eminently patriotic nature of the nobility, and the possibility that political virtue might thrive even under monarchical rule.<sup>10</sup> For Balbo the Piedmontese aristocracy represented an exception to the general decadence suffered by their class in the Italian peninsula throughout the centuries, as although under Emmanuel Filibert the nobility of the Savoyard domains had lost all political power, its military virtues had remained intact. Thus Balbo made a case for the Piedmontese nobility assuming a leading role in the *Risorgimento*, since through their military prowess they might hope to expel Austria from the peninsula.<sup>11</sup>

While this pride in the aristocratic traditions of Balbo’s class persisted after 1848, the introduction of a constitution also led to a reassessment of the role of the aristocracy in the new institutional context. In the wake of

<sup>7</sup> W. Barberis, ‘Continuité aristocratique et tradition militaire du Piémont de la dynastie de Savoie. XVIe–XIXe siècles’, *Revue d’histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 34 (1987), 353–403; A. L. Cardoza, *Aristocrats in Bourgeois Italy: The Piedmontese Nobility, 1861–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Balbo, *Della Società in Italia*, in *Lettere di Politica e di Letteratura, edite e inedite; Precedute da un Discorso sulle Rivoluzioni del Medesimo Autore* (Florence, 1855), p. 229.

<sup>9</sup> Balbo, ‘De l’aristocratie’ (1822), in *Ibid.*, pp. 229–37, p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> F. A. de Chateaubriand, *Political Reflections on the True Interests of the French Nation, on Some Publications, which have Lately Appeared* (London: Colburn, 1814), pp. 84–85. Chateaubriand argues that in a constitutional regime the nobility ‘is not only composed of a sole and only principle, it evidently includes two – honour and virtue, that is to say, liberty’. Compare with Balbo, *Della virtù politica*, in *Pensieri ed esempi* (Florence, 1856), pp. 7–13. Balbo makes reference to Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Book 3, ch. 5, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Balbo, ‘De l’aristocratie’, pp. 234–36.

Guizot's historical works, the Piedmontese elite viewed the *Statuto* granted by the king as evidence of Piedmont's participation in Europe's progress, the continent's representative governments belonging to its latest stage of civilisation. For Balbo, 1848 was nothing less than the culmination of a series of revolutionary eras whose result had been the inevitable establishment of representative freedom. While Balbo argued that 'revolutions are a necessary and perhaps inevitable evil', he, like Guizot, reckoned that only those revolutions whose aim was to restore order and freedom were destined to last and to facilitate progress.<sup>12</sup> The constitutional government permanently introduced after 1848 in Piedmont, all the Piedmontese moderates agreed, belonged to precisely this category; the fact that it had been granted by the king in peaceful circumstances guaranteed its survival, indeed, its capacity to endure.<sup>13</sup>

In this new political context marked by peaceful transformations, Balbo and the Piedmontese moderate liberals continued to view the role of a new social elite as crucial to the efficient operation of representative government. From 1848 onwards, Montesquieu's authority was invoked to support the constitutional order as a compromise between monarchy and the elites, as well as to praise representative institutions. Thus while in the 1820s and 1830s Balbo had referred to him simply in order to advocate the moderating role of the aristocracy, in his *Della Monarchia Rappresentativa* he declared that the primary merit of the *Esprit des Lois*, arguably the most important treatise of the eighteenth century, had been that of alerting continental Europe to the merits of British representative institutions.<sup>14</sup>

Admittedly, Balbo remained proud, even after 1848, of the aristocratic traditions of his family and of the virtues of the ancient nobility, and continued to be convinced that the memory of the military exploits and political careers of the great aristocratic families of Europe was not only important for the aristocrats themselves, but also for the people, because they provided models of patriotism to be emulated.<sup>15</sup> However, along with the rest of the Piedmontese constitutional governing elite, Balbo advanced an idea of nobility no longer based on antiquity and exclusive privileges; in short, one not limited to titled families. This idea was at least partially indebted to the French *doctrinaires*, who argued that France

<sup>12</sup> Balbo, *Della Monarchia rappresentativa in Italia* (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1857), p. 89.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61. Reference to the idea of mixed government as the most perfect government is made on p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Balbo, *Della monarchia*, p. 253. On the importance of the concept of greatness among French liberals see A. Craiutu, *Liberalism under Siege. The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 90.



needed a ruling class which was no longer closed and confined to the old feudal aristocracy, but rather one which was open and mobile, and to which one might accede through merit.<sup>16</sup> Likewise Balbo acknowledged that the nobility, in order to survive, indeed thrive as a class, had to renew itself, and to reflect the changes taking place in society at large: thus it should include the children of magistrates, industrialists, merchants, etc.<sup>17</sup> After 1848 the notion of nobility had to be equated, in his view, with that of 'notabilità'.<sup>18</sup> For Federigo Sclopis and Domenico Carutti nobility should be based solely on 'superior virtue' and 'administration by the best, be it in talent, virtue or wisdom', since otherwise it would simply be an oligarchy.<sup>19</sup> Cavour went as far as to argue that given the political reforms of Piedmont, 'there is no aristocracy whatsoever among us'.<sup>20</sup> The notion that a social 'aristocracy' was at once natural and indestructible, a recurrent theme in contemporary French debates, informs the entire project of Balbo and the Piedmontese moderates.<sup>21</sup>

The natural home for this modernised aristocracy was to be the Senate, as introduced by the Piedmontese Charter, an institution whose moderating, stabilising role was celebrated by Balbo and his circle. Admittedly, they one and all considered the constitutional solution of having an upper house appointed by the king to be unduly limiting. Widespread scepticism about this solution stemmed from a preoccupation with the independence and autonomy of such an assembly both from the people and the monarch. Thus, in Balbo's judgement, no upper chamber could play its characteristically moderating or balancing role unless it were partly composed of hereditary peers. Indeed, while in principle in favour of the openness of this class, and hostile to the rights of primogeniture, Balbo was nonetheless keen on preserving some aristocratic privileges so as to retain a degree of

<sup>16</sup> See P. Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), pp. 107–20, and Jaume, *L'individu effacé ou le Paradoxe du Libéralisme Français* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), pp. 288–311.

<sup>17</sup> Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, p. 245; Balbo, 'Della grandezza delle capitali. Al Conte Ludovico Sauli', in *Lettere di politica e letteratura*, p. 212.

<sup>18</sup> Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, p. 252.

<sup>19</sup> F. Sclopis, *Recherches Historiques et critiques sur l'esprit des lois de Montesquieu* (Turin: Imprimerie Royale, 1857), p. 38. Carutti, *Dei Principii del Governo Libero* (Leonardo, [1852] 1946), p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> C. Cavour, 'L'aristocrazia torinese' (1848) in C. Pischedda and G. Talamo (eds.), *Tutti gli Scritti di Camillo Cavour*, 4 vols. (Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1976–78), vol. III, p. 1340. Similar ideas can be found in M. d'Azeglio, 'Risposta alla lettera del dottore Luigi Carlo Farini, [1847]', in *Scritti politici e letterari*, 2 vols. (Florence: Barbera, 1872), vol. I, pp. 197–217.

<sup>21</sup> Balbo, *Alcune prime Parole sulla Situazione nuova dei Popoli Ligurie Piemontesi di Cesare Balbo* (Turin: Pomba, 1847), pp. 18–19.

separation from the rest of the country's elites.<sup>22</sup> It was only through hereditary rights that the nobility could maintain its autonomy and defend liberty by counterbalancing both the rise of democracy and the weight of monarchical power.<sup>23</sup> Carutti and Cavour, for instance, would have preferred an upper chamber elected by limited suffrage so as to curb royal influence over it.<sup>24</sup> In spite of this commitment to protecting the independence of the Senate from the crown, Balbo considered the monarchy as central to the architecture of the new constitution, and the monarch's moderating power as crucial to its capacity to defend itself against destabilising forces and 'factions'. Like Necker during the French Revolution, Balbo defended both the right of veto of the monarch, and also, with reference to the English constitutional practise of the 'king in parliament', the benefits arising from its sharing legislative powers with parliament and with the executive.<sup>25</sup>

Admittedly, so far as Balbo and the Piedmontese moderates were concerned, the end of the 1848–49 Revolutions in Italy had brought about the defeat of democracy and had demonstrated its inherent flaws; yet it remained a dangerous, Europe-wide social phenomenon and a concept whose mistaken political and moral foundations required elucidation. In post-revolutionary Europe conservatives interpreted this term in a number of different ways, and its definition and scope were often ambiguous. It might simply refer to the civil equality guaranteed by legislation after the French Revolution. In this sense, it had neutral if not positive connotations even among elitist liberals.<sup>26</sup> More commonly, however, democracy was thought to relate to a condition of society. As the French *doctrinaires* had first argued, it referred to the tendency towards homogeneity in social norms and manners, and towards increasing equality in circumstances, which in their turn created new institutions and habits under the influence of public opinion.<sup>27</sup> For Chateaubriand,

<sup>22</sup> As Thiers had advocated in 1830, although unsuccessfully. See De Djin, 'Balancing the Constitution: Bicameralism in Post-revolutionary France, 1814–31', *European Review of History—Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 12 (2005), 249–268, at 260.

<sup>23</sup> See Balbo, *Della monarchia*, 255–56.

<sup>24</sup> To the contrary, both Cavour and Carutti seemed to prefer an upper chamber elected by some sort of limited suffrage as the only mechanism that would guarantee its political influence. Cavour, 'La riforma del Senato' (*Il Risorgimento*, 27 May 1848) in *Tutti gli Scritti*, vol. III, 1247–51; Carutti, *Dei Principii*, pp. 218–19.

<sup>25</sup> Balbo, *Della monarchia*, pp. 244–45. On the debate around the powers to be attributed to the King in the new constitutional framework see L. Mannori, 'Il governo dell'opinione. Le interpretazioni dello Statuto Albertino dal 1848 all'Unità', *Memoria e Ricerca*, 35 (2010), 83–104.

<sup>26</sup> It is in this sense that Balbo wrote admiringly of the French constitutional system before 1848, seeing it as one that was already democratic in nature (Balbo, *Della monarchia*, p. 70).

<sup>27</sup> Craiutu, *Liberalism*, pp. 104–15.

and later Tocqueville, in his wake, democratic society was the result of long-term historical transformations, caused by an increasing equalisation of wealth and by the weakening and ultimately the destruction of the aristocracy. The outcome of such a process was a society in which social ties had disintegrated, a society characterised by a high degree of individualism.<sup>28</sup> Unlike Tocqueville, who regarded the rise of democracy and popular sovereignty as inevitable, Balbo, aligning himself with Guizot, considered the levelling of society to be a process that could not be accepted and had to be forestalled. This democratic tendency, argued Balbo, had in fact two dangerous consequences. First, its homogenising effect on manners and values was a direct threat to the aristocratic values of glory and virtue, and led to mediocrity and the demise of any exceptional talent (a major theme in Chateaubriand and Tocqueville).<sup>29</sup> Secondly, by leading to the destruction of aristocracy, it posed a serious threat to freedom. In Balbo's historical writings a critique of the attacks upon aristocratic power – levelled first by monarchs and then by revolutionaries – represented a recurring theme.<sup>30</sup> This opinion was lent further credence by the events that followed the 1848 Revolution in France, where the authoritarian nature of the regime of Napoleon III demonstrated the intrinsic link between democracy and the rise of despotism.<sup>31</sup>

Balbo and his friends associated their critique of democracy with a rejection of popular sovereignty, the principle upon which its tyrannical and anarchic nature was founded. Some Piedmontese aristocratic liberals, in the wake of the *doctrinaires*, dismissed out of hand the idea that sovereignty belonged to each and every individual, reckoning that such a concept would only serve to legitimise democratic direct participation.<sup>32</sup> Balbo did not endorse Guizot's views, but went on to argue that sovereignty, that is to say, 'the supreme power of governing the state according to the law', was evenly shared among the various institutions of the state, and neither the monarch, nor the upper chamber, nor indeed the lower, could claim to hold it exclusively. Revealing once more a debt to Burke's philosophy of history, he argued that sovereignty stemmed from the previously existing institutions in history, which had been legally modified with the passing of time, rather than inhering in the

<sup>28</sup> L. Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 28–35; Rosanvallon, 'L'histoire du mot démocratie à l'époque moderne' in M. Gauchet, P. Manent, and P. Rosanvallon (eds.), *La Pensée Politique*, 'Situations de la démocratie' (Paris: Seuil, 1993), pp. 11–29.

<sup>29</sup> Balbo, 'Appendice decima: Lettera a Mme' (1835) in E. Ricotti, *Della Vita e degli Scritti del conte Cesare Balbo* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1856), p. 418.

<sup>30</sup> Balbo, 'De l'aristocratie', in *Lettere di Politica e Letteratura*, pp. 229–37, (p. 242).

<sup>31</sup> Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, p. 505. <sup>32</sup> Carutti, *Dei principi*, pp. 190–91.

nation itself.<sup>33</sup> Like the other Piedmontese moderates Balbo considered God to be the ultimate source of any political authority.<sup>34</sup>

Balbo's aristocratic liberalism was likewise incompatible with republican concepts of freedom, and with ancient and modern republican institutions. Admittedly, after 1848 Balbo's criticism of civic participation, republican virtue and republican states (with the exception of the United States of America) represented a direct attack on the French Revolution, on Mazzini's democratic brand of republican patriotism, and on the recent short-lived republican experiments in Rome, Venice, and Florence. What 1848 demonstrated was that democratic republics were doomed to collapse or to lead to despotism. From the French Revolution onwards, argued Balbo, Machiavelli's *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio* alongside Montesquieu's opinions had contributed to the widespread and dangerous belief that the example of the Roman republic could be replicated in modern times. Perfect equality of condition among its citizens was a necessary, but unrealistic and an anachronistic precondition for the survival of republican government.<sup>35</sup> This critique of republics, however, did not apply to the United States of America, praised by Balbo and the moderates as a model of modern representative government.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, Balbo's rejection of the language of civic virtue targeted other contemporary, more conservative strands of Italian political thought, indebted as they were to the rapturous reception accorded to Sismondi's *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes* (1809–19).<sup>37</sup> After Sismondi, the historical example of the city-states was subsequently reassessed by many Italian patriots, who came to the conclusion that only a local political tradition could provide a set of political practices in

<sup>33</sup> Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, pp. 185–86.

<sup>34</sup> I am indebted to Roberto Romani for this point. See Romani, 'Reluctant Revolutionaries: Moderate Liberalism in the Kingdom of Sardinia, 1849–1859', *The Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), 45–73; and Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, pp. 172–73, pp. 77–86. This emphasis on the historical legitimacy of sovereignty has led Francesco Traniello to highlight the continuities between de Maistre and Balbo's views. See F. Traniello, *Religione Cattolica e Stato Nazionale: dal Risorgimento al Secondo Dopoguerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), pp. 151–55.

<sup>35</sup> Balbo, *Della virtù politica*, p. 9; *Pensieri sulla Storia d'Italia* [1838–42] (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1858), pp. 440–41; Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, p. 45. For Balbo the few surviving ancient republics of Europe were obsolete, small-scale polities that could and should not be imitated. For his critique of republican virtue and republican government see Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, pp. 87–8, pp. 129–32.

<sup>36</sup> Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, p. 205.

<sup>37</sup> R. Romani, 'The republican foundations of Sismondi's *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique*', *History of European Ideas*, 31 (2005), 17–33; N. Urbinati, 'Republicanism after the French Revolution: The case of Simon de Sismondi', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73 (2012), 95–109.

tune with the history and manners of Italians, guarantee the support of the masses for the national project, and at the same time, owing to its socially conservative nature, preclude unstable democratic experiments.<sup>38</sup> Balbo's critique of what he saw as the infatuation of many Italians with their historical, and in particular, medieval past, revolved around a number of objections that were, directly or indirectly, linked to a distinction between ancient and modern freedom, and between medieval and modern politics.<sup>39</sup> First, he argued that individual rights were never properly protected in the medieval republics; secondly he observed that modern representation was a far cry from that existing in the Middle Ages.<sup>40</sup>

Balbo and the Piedmontese aristocratic liberals did not deny, however, the importance of fostering public spiritedness and patriotism. Rather, they sought to decouple patriotism from any republican notion of direct participation and from its association with republics.<sup>41</sup> Montesquieu had been wrong to suppose that virtue was only possible in small republics. On the contrary (as some Neapolitan philosophers had already argued in the eighteenth century), patriotism and virtue were equally possible in monarchies. Virtue, argued Balbo, consisted of loyalty to one's government.<sup>42</sup> Thus he replaced republican virtue with what he defined as a 'political education' (*educazione politica*), essential to guarantee the people's attachment to their institutions and to ensure their support for the national cause. It was a lack of political education in continental Europe that had made constitutional regimes so unstable. This education could be achieved by a number of different means, with, for example, university education for the elites, while for the masses there might be basic instruction in the religious principles of morality.<sup>43</sup> A free press would make a substantial contribution to the education of the nation: publicity was the precondition for the existence of representative government, but the press would also educate the general public through

<sup>38</sup> A. M. Rao, 'Republicanism in Italy from the eighteenth century to the early Risorgimento', in N. Urbinati (ed.), *The Transformation of Republicanism in Modern and Contemporary Italy*, special issue of the *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 17 (2012), 149–64.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, Carutti's comparison between the two forms of freedom borrowed from Constant in his *Dei Principii*, pp. 115–17.

<sup>40</sup> Balbo, *Pensieri sulla storia d'Italia*, pp. 470–1; *Della Monarchia*, pp. 44–46.

<sup>41</sup> T. Mamiani, 'Della scienza politica in Francia' in D. L. Carné (ed.), *Etudes sur l'histoire du Gouvernement Représentatif en France de 1789 à 1848*, 2 vols. (Paris: Didier 1855), *Rivista Contemporanea*, 4 (1855), 486–517, (511, 512, 515).

<sup>42</sup> Balbo, 'Della virtù politica', 11; *Della Monarchia*, p. 116.

<sup>43</sup> Balbo, 'Lettera VI. Dell'educazione politica delle nazioni', in *Lettere di Politica e Letteratura*, pp. 383–400.

the dissemination of the universal principles of rationality.<sup>44</sup> Piedmont may well have finally caught up with the other more advanced European countries through its adoption of a constitution, but the stability of its new institutions, argued Balbo, could only be achieved through the political education of its elites and the moral indoctrination of the masses.

### **III The Making of a Democratic Monarchy: Vincenzo Gioberti and Democratic Interpretations of the *Statuto Albertino***

The 1848 Revolutions not only revitalised critiques of the destructive effects of democracy in Piedmont, they contributed at the same time to the freeing of this term from negative connotations, helping to turn it into a respectable political option. Even among the advocates of democracy or those who welcomed it as a social tendency, however, there was no consensus over its meaning, as self-defined democrats held a variety of potentially divergent political views.<sup>45</sup> In Rome, the 1849 Republican experiment led by Mazzini was defined by its supporters as a ‘pure democracy’. From a political and institutional standpoint, such a pure democracy was based on the full recognition of the people’s powers, guaranteed by universal male suffrage and by the role attributed to the assembly not only to legislate but also to control the government and the executive. While Mazzini rejected the notion of popular sovereignty, which he attributed to God alone, the motto of his republic was nonetheless ‘God and the people’, an association which radically challenged the legitimacy of papal political authority.<sup>46</sup> This religiously defined notion of democracy was advanced by other supporters of the Roman republic, among them Father Gioacchino Ventura who, being more indebted to Lamennais’ ideas than to those of Mazzini, viewed religion not only as an emancipatory influence but also as the sole instrument capable of founding and legitimising people’s power and of preventing democracy from turning into anarchy.<sup>47</sup>

Rather than being associated with these republican principles, in Piedmont the term ‘democracy’ was used to justify the need for a broad

<sup>44</sup> Balbo, *Della Monarchia*, pp. 108, 339.

<sup>45</sup> On uses of the terms ‘democrazia’ and ‘democratico’, and their relationship with political practices see L. Fruci, ‘Democracy in Italy’, forthcoming in J. Innes and M. Philp (eds.), *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean 1780–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Francia, *Rivoluzione del Risorgimento*.

<sup>47</sup> G. Ventura, *Discorso Funebre per li Morti di Vienna: Recitato in Roma il dì 27 Novembre 1848 nella Insigne Chiesa di S. Andrea della Valle* in G. Ventura, *Opere Complete*, 20 vols. (Milan: Turati, 1860), vol. I, pp. 45, 105–07.

social basis to the new constitutional monarchy. Many Piedmontese observers to the left of the moderates viewed the establishment of the constitutional regime as an opportunity to accommodate the new democratic tendencies of European and Piedmontese societies, rather than considering such tendencies as a threat to the new political order. Representatives of this political stance were, among others, the prominent Piedmontese journalists Angelo Brofferio (1802–67) and Lorenzo Valerio (1810–65), both elected to the new Piedmontese parliament in 1848, and editors of the influential *Messaggiere Torinese* and *La Concordia*.<sup>48</sup> For them the 1848 Revolutions in Europe, having been marked by the triumph of the people over tyranny, had been quintessentially democratic in nature. These self-defined democratic supporters of the constitution had welcomed the February Revolution in France while condemning the more radical insurgency erupting in June, marked as it was by the activism of the workers in the *Ateliers Nationaux*. Valerio's newspaper dismissed the uprising as a 'terrible sedition' perpetrated by workers in the grip of perverted doctrines, praised General Cavaignac's military intervention in defence of the republic, and even went so far as to applaud his alleged display of leniency.<sup>49</sup>

In Brofferio and Valerio's view there was no incompatibility between the defence of monarchical institutions and the accommodation of the existing democratic tendencies of society. The 'democratic' supporters of the new constitutions were thus staunchly monarchical in their allegiances not only out of loyalty to the Savoyard dynasty, but also because they believed that the solution of the national question in Italy lay in the creation of a federation of constitutional monarchies. While between 1847 and 1848 these self-defined democrats abandoned their advocacy of an indirect system of representation based on elections of municipal assemblies in order to embrace instead the principle of a national representation that was directly elected, they remained unreservedly anti-republican and anti-Mazzinian.<sup>50</sup> *La Concordia* drew a distinction between the 'Italian thoughtful democracy' it supported, and 'the vacuous and frivolous democracy born in the streets, [and in] the theatres', one based on 'childish declamations'.<sup>51</sup> The triumph of 'true

<sup>48</sup> A. Viarengo, 'Tra piazza e Parlamento. Lorenzo Valerio nel 1848' in Viarengo (ed.) *Lorenzo Valerio, Carteggio*, 5 vols. (Turin, Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, 1998), vol. III (1848), pp. VII–CXV; 'La sconfitta. Lorenzo Valerio e la sinistra subalpina nel 1849' in *Carteggio*, vol. IV (1849), (Turin, 2003), pp. VII–CXLVI.

<sup>49</sup> *La Concordia*, 29 June 1848, n.154.

<sup>50</sup> L. Mannori, 'Le consulte di stato', *Rassegna Storica Toscana* (1999), XLV, 2, pp. 347–49.

<sup>51</sup> *La Concordia*, 20 April 1848, n.96.



democracy', as the *Messaggiere Torinese* put it, would merge the privileged classes and the oppressed into one powerful mass.<sup>52</sup>

Once the new constitution had been introduced, what was then at stake, the left-wing liberals or 'democrats' believed, was to guarantee that its functioning would reflect such a democratic transformation of society. In other words, what was needed was to 'democratise our constitutional institutions, so that the people would find democracy in the constitutional monarchy'.<sup>53</sup> Such a notion of a thoroughgoing compatibility between popular government and monarchy was built on Lafayette's earlier idea of a 'monarchie républicaine', a term he had coined in 1830 in support of the new Orléanist monarchy, one in which the throne would be surrounded by republican institutions, with the king being first and foremost a citizen king. In fact, the left-wing Piedmontese press used similar terms when celebrating Charles Albert, Angelo Brofferio even going so far as to describe him as 'the best citizen of his country'.<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that in the Italian peninsula these Piedmontese 'democrats' were not alone in endorsing such an idea, thus distancing themselves from Mazzinian republicanism. Along similar lines, in fact, Tuscan democrats like Domenico Guerrazzi embraced the notion of a popular monarchy, convinced that a direct pact was needed between sovereign and people, without the existence of any intermediary elite, and that a republic might be set up in Italy but only in the very distant future.<sup>55</sup> To justify their preference, however, for a combination of republican institutions and monarchy, rather than referring to Lafayette, the Piedmontese democrats reverted to the eighteenth-century Piedmontese poet and playwright Vittorio Alfieri, whose anti-tyrannical, republican beliefs and anti-French rhetoric, originally aristocratic in content, had often acquired radical overtones when employed by Italian patriots since the very late eighteenth century. For Brofferio, Vittorio Alfieri had been the first to demonstrate that republic and monarchy coexisted in England, in the same way as in his own day under King Carlo Alberto republic and monarchy had cemented a permanent alliance.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Il Messaggiere Torinese*, 5 May 1849, n. 36, 142.

<sup>53</sup> 'Cadorna to Pinelli', 1 April 1848, in *Lorenzo Valerio. Carteggio*, vol. III, p. 116.

<sup>54</sup> *Il Messaggiere Torinese*, n.30, XVI, 12 April 1848. On revolutionary interpretations of Alfieri see V. Crisculo, *Albordi di Democrazia nell'Italia in Rivoluzione (1792-1802)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2006), pp. 51-52.

<sup>55</sup> A. Chavistelli, 'Modelli istituzionali e discorso pubblico nel Risorgimento: la Monarchia Popolare di Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi', *Le Carte e la Storia*, XIII (2007), pp. 113-28. See D. Guerrazzi, *Note Autobiografiche e Poema di F. Domenico Guerrazzi* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1899), pp. 169-70.

<sup>56</sup> *Il Messaggiere Torinese*, 25 March 1848, XVII, p. 97.

The political platform of the Piedmontese democrats was hardly radical in content. They believed that the alliance between monarchy and popular sovereignty, the basis for the successful establishment of such a democratic monarchy, could be accomplished through the attainment of three main objectives. First of all, such an alliance could be guaranteed if the Savoy dynasty was committed to leading a national war of liberation against the Austrians in Northern Italy, and to presiding over the creation of an Italian federation of states. Popular ratification through a constituent assembly would enable the creation, in the words of 'La Concordia', of a veritable 'national democratic monarchy'.<sup>57</sup> Second, such an alliance between people and monarch required the forging of a new ruling class in Piedmont and the marginalisation of the reactionary aristocracy that still dominated the Court. Piedmontese democrats openly decried the aristocrats' influence over the monarch, deploring their hegemony over the highest ranks of the army and diplomacy.<sup>58</sup> Finally, the proposed alliance entailed no support for radical social measures, but rather a commitment to the principle of civil equality. The democratic *Messaggiere Torinese* advocated the limitation of excessive pensions and stipends, the reform of the land registry, and a radical reduction of the taxes that weighed so heavily upon the poorer classes, while more generally condemning, in a purely republican fashion, luxury and excessive inequalities in the distribution of wealth.<sup>59</sup> Piedmontese democrats considered at the same time the failure of the *Ateliers* in France as evidence of the impossibility of replacing the principles of the free market with state-led enterprises.<sup>60</sup>

Vincenzo Gioberti's political opinions from 1848 onwards aligned themselves with this tendency among Piedmontese intellectuals. At the beginning of 1848 Gioberti was still hopeful that the ideas elaborated in his *Primato* in 1843 could be turned into reality. A celebration of the pope as the leader of the national movement seemed to be at the heart of his message at the beginning of his public tour of the main cities of Central and Northern Italy, but this was gradually abandoned in favour of an emphasis on the contribution of each city to the national regeneration and on Piedmontese leadership in the war of liberation.<sup>61</sup> From the very outset this leadership represented the heart of the programme of his

<sup>57</sup> *La Concordia*, 20 april 1848, n. 96, and 2 June 1848, n.132.

<sup>58</sup> P. Gentile, *L'ombra del re. Vittorio Emanuele II e le Politiche di Corte* (Rome: Carocci, 2011), pp. 47 and ff.

<sup>59</sup> *Il Messaggiere Torinese*, 13 July 1849, n.56. <sup>60</sup> *La Concordia*, 14 June 1848, n.142.

<sup>61</sup> F. Traniello, 'Rosmini e Gioberti e le rivoluzioni del '48', *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa*, 55 (1999), 93–110; M. Manfredi, 'Risorgimento e tradizioni municipali: Il viaggio di propaganda di Vincenzo Gioberti nell'Italia del 1848', *Memoria e Ricerca*, 43 (2013)7–23.

premiership. "In his first speech as prime minister Gioberti advocated the election of a federative constituent assembly to create a federation of monarchies lead by Piedmont, In the alliance between people and throne at the basis of this constituent assembly he saw the essence of democratic government."<sup>62</sup> While some of the Piedmontese democrats were later disappointed with his performance as the prime minister of a short-lived government in 1849, blaming him for not being democratic enough, at the time they enthusiastically welcomed him into their ranks.<sup>63</sup> In his *Gesuita Moderno*, published at the end of 1848, he had gone so far as to define himself as an advocate of a 'royal democracy', one that, combining popular government with monarchical rule, stood in sharp contrast with the deeply unstable municipal and factional republics of Italian medieval history.<sup>64</sup> Drawing a comparison between events in Piedmont and France, Gioberti insisted that such a combination was at once possible and beneficial. Whereas the Savoyard king, Gioberti argued, had prudently shored up his throne by embracing the existing aspirations for reform, Louis-Philippe's stubborn opposition to change had cost him his crown.<sup>65</sup>

In redefining the new constitutional monarchy as democratic, Gioberti, in his most important post-1848 political tract, the *Rinnovamento*, was withering in his criticisms of his friends and prominent members of the moderate party, among them Cesare Balbo and Massimo d'Azeglio, for their social elitism. In fact, he accused them of not understanding the spirit of the times, believing as they did that 1848 would be simply a repetition of the aristocratic revolution of 1821, and thus charged the Piedmontese aristocracy with being unduly attached to traditions. Cesare Balbo, in particular, was fearful, Gioberti noted, of any public displays of popular mobilisation.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, Gioberti defined democracy as a middle-class phenomenon, judging like Guizot that it could and should be confined to an educated elite characterised by its *capacité*. While Gioberti argued that the Italian monarchies had to reconcile all social classes through the

<sup>62</sup> N. Rodolico, 'Dichiarazione politica del minister presieduto da Vincenzo Gioberti', 10 February 1849, in G. Sardo (ed.), *Storia del Parlamento Italiano, Dal ministero Gioberti all'Ingresso di Cavour nel Governo*, 20 vols. (Palermo: S.F. Flaccovio, 1964), vol. II, pp. 127–34.

<sup>63</sup> See A. Brofferio, *Storia del Piemonte dal 1814 ai nostri Giorni* (Turin: Fontana, 1849), pp. 50–51.

<sup>64</sup> V. Gioberti, *Del Gesuita Moderno* (Brussels: Leghorn, 1848), XIV.

<sup>65</sup> 'Lettera di Vincenzo Gioberti sui fatti di Francia', Supplement to *La Concordia*, 54, 1 March 1848.

<sup>66</sup> Gioberti, *Del Rinnovamento civile d'Italia*, F. Nicolini (ed.), 3 vols. (Bari: Laterza and Figli Bari, 3 vols., 1911), vol. I, p. 45.

merging of interests and the forging of a union between patricians, middle classes, and 'plebs' through the implementation just laws, he was at the same time convinced that current social conditions did not permit the equal participation of one and all in the political life of the new constitutional regime.<sup>67</sup> Admittedly he believed that the people (*popolo*) consisted of both 'plebe' and 'borghesia', but he was also convinced that the 'plebe' could only be led by the 'ingegno' (wisdom) that belonged to the middle classes (*borghesia* or *classe media*).<sup>68</sup> Those self-defined democrats who based their power on the 'plebe' or 'volgo' were nothing more than demagogues. Gioberti went on to condemn Rousseau's idea of *volonté generale* as a viable foundation for a constitutional regime, and reverted to Guizot's idea of *capacité* and the sovereignty of reason to justify restricting suffrage to the *borghesia*.<sup>69</sup>

It was a betrayal of the true meaning of democracy, Gioberti reckoned, that had led to the failure of the 1848 Revolutions in Europe and Italy alike. Unlike Balbo, Gioberti did not consider the rise of Napoleon III's regime to be the inevitable consequence of the democratic nature of the revolution, seeing it rather as the result of Napoleon's own betrayal in 1849 of the democratic tendencies existing in Europe, which would, if correctly understood, have required him to 'combine natural aristocracy and universal election' in France, and to rally to the defence, rather than to engage in a persecution, of the governments of the wise based on the popular vote in Italy and the rest of Europe.<sup>70</sup> Italian republicans, whom Gioberti dismissed as 'false democrats' and 'puritans', had also mistakenly tried to slavishly imitate France during 1848, without taking into account the different degree of progress enjoyed by Italian society, and had introduced institutions for which Italians were not yet ready.<sup>71</sup> They had also mistaken the extent to which civic virtues ought to be exercised. While Gioberti was convinced that a modern monarchy required civil virtue to survive, as much, if not more, than did republics, he was equally convinced that the Italian republicans' attempts to put into practise an unrestrained '*vivere civile*' in 1848 was doomed to fail, as Italians were not sufficiently mature.<sup>72</sup> Political freedom could only work if associated with virtue and science, qualities possessed by one section of the population alone; the exercise of virtue had to be

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 31–32, 44–45. <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 159, vol. III, pp. 10–11.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 147, 159. <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 72.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 175, 343; vol. II, p. 154.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 254. Gioberti did not exclude the possibility that in a distant future Italy and Europe might follow in the footsteps of America. Unlike Balbo, in 1853 he went as far as to suggest that in the years to come in Europe too, and not excluding Italy, such a model of a modern republic might be introduced. See *Del Rinnovamento*, vol. II, pp. 248–51.

complemented by that of a prudent authority – understood primarily as respect for the rule of law – and the safeguarding of negative freedom, which he celebrated through reference to Bastiat's economic theory and to Constant's theory of 'negative government'.<sup>73</sup>

If 'true' democracy was to be established in Piedmont and Italy after 1848, it could only be grounded in the autochthonous culture of the peninsula. Unlike Balbo, Gioberti believed that Italy's revolution could not be based on the imitation of foreign institutions or culture. The existing monarchies and Catholicism represented the two main 'native' and 'national' elements on which to build both democracy and Italy's political revival. While by 1849 he had abandoned his earlier dreams of a federation presided over by the pope, Gioberti retained his belief in the centrality of Catholicism as both a national and a universal element of Italy's culture. But after 1848 he could also find additional arguments in favour of a democracy in his interpretation of the political implications of Christianity. It was against a purely repressive understanding of Catholicism, as advocated after 1848 by Juan Donoso Cortés, that Gioberti vindicated the intimate association between religion and progress. In 1850 Donoso Cortés had in fact spoken of religion only and exclusively in terms of authority and obedience, and had pointed to the church as the institution that could alleviate all contemporary moral and social evils. It was by recognising the subordination of any and every form of political existence to its supremacy that Europe could hope to stem the disintegration of all social bonds. Against these ideas, Gioberti argued instead that Catholicism, if purified of its Jesuitism, provided the necessary means to resolve the current problems of society; however, it did so not as a tool of theocratic and absolute power, but first and foremost by promoting social reforms, alongside the intervention of legitimate and independent political institutions. Evangelical morality, argued Gioberti, was first and foremost democratic in nature, as it was founded on the 'dogma of natural equality and brotherhood', and preached charity towards the poor as a necessary moral quality.<sup>74</sup>

Another important native cultural tradition on which to build democracy after the mistakes of 1848 was the peculiar approach to economic development offered by Italy's tradition of economic thought. If social equality did not entail universal access to political rights, for Gioberti it nonetheless justified economic emancipation.<sup>75</sup> But the economic emancipation of the Piedmontese populace, argued Gioberti,

<sup>73</sup> *Del Rinascimento*, vol. I, pp. 154–57.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120–3. Compare to J. D. Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el Catolicismo, el Liberalismo y el Socialismo* (Barcelona, 1851).

<sup>75</sup> *Del Rinascimento*, vol. I, p. 126.

could neither be achieved through the free trade policies that had successfully enriched England and ameliorated its social fabric under Peel, nor through the chimerical and unnatural panaceas proposed by the French socialists: it required carefully planned governmental intervention that reflected the specific social and economic context of the country, as well as its own intellectual traditions.<sup>76</sup> By so arguing, Gioberti was endorsing the typically *Risorgimento* idea of economics as a social and administrative science, or 'public economy', one that aimed at improving social conditions through a set of appropriate economic policies, rather than simply unveiling the natural and universally valid laws of the market. According to this idea, rooted in the economic writings of Pietro Verri in particular, and further refined in a number of influential texts published by Giuseppe Pecchio, the aim of economics was to guarantee the greatest happiness for the greatest majority, a principle that demonstrated the superiority of this Italian social and moral approach to economics over that of English economic thought.<sup>77</sup> Accordingly, Gioberti argued that the *Rinnovamento* of Italy could not be achieved without measures that would make the 'transmission and successive distribution of property according to the well-being of the greatest number', as 'freedom of trade is useless without economic reforms', and these latter varied depending upon 'the conditions peculiar to each country'.<sup>78</sup> Such measures included sound laws, more equitable taxation of the poorest strata of the population, 'fair' wages that would guarantee the right to work, as well as education.

Gioberti's views on democracy explained also his emphasis on education as key to relaunching the *Risorgimento* after 1848. The need to ground democracy in knowledge and wisdom, as well as in Guizotian *capacité*, accounted for Gioberti's conviction that intellectuals were called upon to play a central role in educating society and in guiding, step by step, its moral advancement, in order to broaden its social foundations in the future. However, surprising as it may sound today, he did not think that the political journalism that had erupted in Turin and in Italy more broadly from 1847 onwards was best suited to further this aim. Gioberti was not alone in holding this view, as many other contemporary observers were alarmed by revolutionary journalism, likening its anarchic consequences to those of untrammelled democracy, and raising concerns about

<sup>76</sup> *Del Rinnovamento*, vol. II, p.186.

<sup>77</sup> M. Isabella, "'Una scienza dell'amor patrio': public economy, freedom and civilisation in Giuseppe Pecchio's Work 1827–30", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 4 (1999), 157–83.

<sup>78</sup> Compare G. Pecchio, *Storia dell'Economia Pubblica in Italia*, G. Gaspari (ed.) (Varese: Sugarco, [1829] 1992), pp. 215–22, with *Del Rinnovamento*, vol. II, pp. 185–86, 192.

the impact of commercialisation on the independence and integrity of men of letters, as well as on the intrinsic quality of culture. Likewise, Gioberti denounced journalists as 'slaves' who wrote solely for money and were excessively partisan in their opinions.<sup>79</sup> In other words, the democratisation of culture itself had dangerous consequences. As he had noted in 1848, while 'democracy tends to extend the sway of knowledge, by sharing it amongst one and all, which is a great good, at the same time it also tends to lessen its intensity and depth, which is a great evil'.<sup>80</sup> While supportive of the freedom of the press, Gioberti viewed it first and foremost as a means to disseminating universal wisdom, rather than unduly polarised opinions.

This distrust for turbulent public debate was reflected also in Gioberti's own understanding of the nature of representative government. For an advocate of a democratic and constitutional monarchy, he was surprisingly unenthusiastic about certain aspects of parliamentary life. In his view, utopian ideals had prevailed over common sense in the revolutionary republican assemblies of 1848 and 1849 in Italy. In general, given the rarity of wisdom, by its very nature associated with a minority of individuals alone, what often prevailed in the history of parliaments had been mediocrity, since in the chamber 'wisdom is measured by the lungs, and not by the brain'.<sup>81</sup> While he did not deny the importance of party politics and parliamentary debates, which prevented 'the tyranny of a single opinion', Gioberti remained convinced that parliamentary deliberations had their own intrinsic vices. True, some of these flaws owed much to the monocameral nature of those revolutionary representative governments, Gioberti's preference in fact being for the separate assemblies of the sort introduced by the *Statuto Albertino*. However, he concluded that the *Rinnovamento* of Italy could be better accomplished with the support of a strong executive power than through public assemblies. Gioberti thus retained an ambiguous attitude towards parliamentary governance: while he did not deny that parliaments could be beneficial, he argued that they had to be limited in size, and went as far as to suggest that time alone would demonstrate the extent to which such institutions would serve to bolster democracy.<sup>82</sup> His enthusiasm for the constitutional regime in the end

<sup>79</sup> *Del Rinnovamento*, vol. III, pp. 100–1. Compare to N. Tommaseo, 'La critica, la civiltà e la virtù', *Rivista contemporanea*, 6 (1856), 5–29, at 13. On this topic see also M. Isabella, 'Freedom of the press, public opinion and liberalism in the Risorgimento' in 'Nationality before Liberty? Risorgimento Political Thought in Transnational Context', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 17 (2012), 551–67.

<sup>80</sup> Gioberti, *Apologia del libro intitolato Del Gesuita Moderno, con alcune Considerazioni attorno al Risorgimento Italiano* (Brussels: Leghorn, 1848), p. 439.

<sup>81</sup> *Del Rinnovamento*, vol. III, p. 47. <sup>82</sup> *Del Rinnovamento*, vol. III, pp. 51, 48.



owed more to its capacity to accommodate and guide from above the ineluctable process of democratisation of society and to accomplish the national *Risorgimento*, by virtue of an alliance between the educated middle classes and the monarchy under the leadership of intellectuals devoted to the education of the *popolo*, than to any deep-seated commitment on his part to the principle of representative government.

#### IV Conclusions

Piedmontese political thought after 1848 had a triumphalist, confident tone, although it also reflected a number of preoccupations and anxieties. In the mind of the supporters of the new constitutional monarchy, 1848 in fact had ushered in a new stable political regime, confirming the superiority of Piedmont over any other Italian state, but it reminded them also of the existence of constant threats to it. Recent French and European events made them aware of the need to protect and stabilise it against the possibility of social unrest, and prevent Piedmont from suffering from those social upheavals it had fortunately been spared. Balbo and Gioberti came up with different solutions to these abiding concerns. Balbo's political thought lay somewhere between, on the one hand, the views of Chateaubriand and Tocqueville, with whom he shared concerns about the devastating impact of levelling and an appreciation of the aristocracy's historical role in defending freedom, and those of Guizot and the *doctrinaires* on the other, given their outright condemnation of democracy. Balbo's response to the challenges posed by the reconstitution of a social and political order after 1848 were aristocratic and liberal at the same time, given his equal emphasis on the importance of stemming democratisation, and guaranteeing parliamentary government in close dialogue with educated public opinion. Gioberti advanced with a more socially inclusive (or democratic), but at the same time more authoritarian and *dirigiste*, solution. His main target of criticism was the old Piedmontese aristocracy, even when dressed in novel liberal clothes, since it had, he charged, ignored the changes taking place in the social order. At the same time, while the democratisation of society could not be halted, Gioberti clearly felt that it had to be managed carefully, by controlling and moulding the public sphere from above, minimising parliamentary debate, and introducing a strong executive at the expense of the legislature. What both these visions shared was a belief in the need to contain political power within the hands of an elite, although whether this could be gradually extended or not remained a bone of contention. While Gioberti's emphasis on democracy was soon marginalised politically, as democratic supporters of the constitution quickly lost

influence in the parliament, and Balbo's desire to maintain certain aristocratic privileges was ignored, a celebration of elitist government, the government of the 'ottimati', characterised Piedmontese political thought after 1848 and provided the intellectual underpinning for the centre-left coalitions governing Piedmont in the 1850s. And Gioberti's support for a strong executive, along with Balbo's praise for the Piedmontese military tradition, became common currency among Piedmontese moderates in 1859 in the context of the war against Austria that led to the creation of the Kingdom of Italy. These events proved the extent to which, even after 1848 for the Piedmontese liberal establishment, the *Risorgimento*, while led by a constitutional monarchy and representative government, remained after all a military affair requiring strong leadership, obedience, and even the temporary withdrawal of individual liberties in the name of the accomplishment of the national project.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> R. Romani, 'Political thought in action: The Italian moderates in 1859', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 17 (2012), 593–607.

## 17 Revolution and the Slav

### Question: 1848 and Mikhail Bakunin

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*Jean-Christophe Angaut*

Even though posterity has claimed him as one of the ideological founders of anarchism, notably because of his conflict with Karl Marx during the International Working Man's Association (IWMA), the Russian revolutionary, Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76), was principally known during his lifetime for the role he played in the Revolutions of 1848–49. Perhaps of all of those European contemporaries who were active in the revolutionary events of that time, Bakunin was someone who most incarnated their contradictions. Having hoped for and anticipated a European-wide revolution for several years, Bakunin completely threw himself into revolutionary events, and never ceased to travel throughout the continent between February 1848 and May 1849, personally taking an active part in several insurrectional events, notably in Prague and Dresden. This revolutionary activity came to an abrupt end in spring 1849 and was followed by twelve years of imprisonment and exile, an interregnum concluding with Bakunin's famous escape from Siberia and return to Europe via the United States at the end of 1861. If the hiatus in activism imposed by incarceration seemingly did not cause Bakunin to reassess his own revolutionary objectives during his imprisonment, his subsequent confrontation with changed European geopolitical realities in the 1860s would inflect his thought sufficiently enough such that by the end of the decade he would re-emerge in the iconic form remembered by posterity as one of the founding fathers of 'anarchism'. This chapter will examine how Bakunin interpreted the prospects of revolution through a Hegelian lens during the early 1840s; his role in the events of 1848–49; and how his 1848 manifesto, published in both French and German, *Appeal to the Slavs*, captured many of the different contradictory aspects of the 1848 Revolutions, particularly when recast in the light of Friedrich Engels' criticisms of it. It will close with some speculation as to what might have been the real impact of those revolutions on Bakunin's subsequent evolution as a cosmopolitan, multilingual revolutionary, once he regained his freedom in the 1860s.

## I. Hegelian Anticipations of Revolution

Retrospectively, the Revolutions of 1848 appear like the natural outlet of a decade of growing protest directed at the established political and social order of the ruling European elites which emerged triumphant after the Vienna Settlement. Spurred on by the confluence of democratic, socialist, and nationalist movements, these revolutions were for many revolutionaries like Bakunin the moment they had been predicting and anticipating for many years.

Born to minor Russian landed gentry, Bakunin travelled to Germany in July 1840 in order to complete his philosophical education and to escape a family environment he found oppressive. He came at a moment when the country was in a state of intellectual effervescence. The reformist hopes inspired by the arrival of the new Prussian monarch, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, were in the process of deflating, and the king had named Hegel's old rival, Schelling, at the University of Berlin to fight against the pernicious liberal influence of Hegelian philosophy. Since the publication of David Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, the Hegelian School had itself undergone a succession of internal divisions, first between 'left' and 'right' Hegelians, then with the growth of the 'young' Hegelian movement, which would transform many of its members from liberals into radical democrats, communists, socialists, or even – at least if one thinks in ideological terms of the genealogical status currently assigned to figures like Max Stirner or Bakunin – 'anarchists'.

Having met Arnold Ruge in Dresden at the end of the summer of 1841, Bakunin would implicate himself in the 'young Hegelian' movement, publishing an article in October 1842 for Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* under the French pseudonym 'Jules Elysard', and entitled 'The Reaction in Germany. A Fragment from a Frenchman'.<sup>1</sup> In this brief text, Bakunin, having sketched out a rough tableau of contemporary reactionary beliefs, specifically targeted those who sought to reconcile the medieval social order with the basic tenants of democratic principles. By way of a long peripheral analysis of the categories of opposition and contradiction in Hegel's *Logic*, Bakunin asserted that the current confrontation between reactionaries and democrats in Germany was inevitable. At the end of his article, he even insisted on the signs of an imminent revolution. According to Elysard-Bakunin, the growth of socialist movements in France and Britain constituted the beginnings

<sup>1</sup> Jules Élysard [M. Bakunin], 'Die Reaktion in Deutschland. Fragment von einem Franzose', *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 14–21 October 1842. It can be found in English translation in A. Lehning, Michael Bakunin, *Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), pp. 37–58.

of a new world of practice that only Hegelian philosophy, resolutely theoretical, could articulate. In spite of their purported rejection of the abstractions of philosophy, Bakunin's writings during the 1848–49 Revolutions would continue to reel from the repercussions of those Hegelian influences explicit in his writings from the early 1840s. As shall be shown below, Bakunin would later describe the role of the Slavic peoples in terms of universal history, translating Hegelian spirit's into a world-historical revolutionary movement at work in the insurrectionary contagion begun in 1848 and the desires for emancipation of those peoples it expressed.

In the months following the publication of his article, Bakunin no longer felt safe in Germany and left for Switzerland. Simultaneous with this decision, Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher* and Marx's *Rheinische Zeitung* were shut down. In Switzerland, inspired by his reading of the German communist Wilhelm Weitling's *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit*, Bakunin wrote an article, 'Communism', published in June 1843 in the Zurich-based journal the *Schweizerischer Republikaner*.<sup>2</sup> Pursuing his reflections already published in Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, Bakunin asserted a parallel between philosophy and communism (at the same time he denounced crudely materialistic conceptions of communism). The end of both was to liberate mankind on a theoretical and practical level. Bakunin was denounced as a subversive by Johann Kasper Bluntschli, the conservative jurist and state councillor charged with preparing an official investigative police report on the subversive influence of Weitling, whose papers had been seized in Zurich. When Bakunin learned that the Russian government demanded his immediate extradition from Switzerland, he fled for Paris in February 1844. Arriving in early March, Bakunin would remain in Paris until his expulsion in November 1847, with the exception of a few excursions to the French provinces and a prolonged stay in Brussels between April and July 1844.

Although he would claim later in his 1851 *Confession*, addressed to Tsar Nicholas I, to have been isolated and deprived of any perspective during his time in Paris, Bakunin, in fact, was in touch with numerous French socialists (Etienne Cabet, Pierre Leroux, Victor Considerant, Louis Blanc, George Sand, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, with whom he discussed Hegel), German democrats and communist members of the journal, *Vorwärts* (notably Marx, whom he met before Marx was thrown

<sup>2</sup> This text has not yet been translated into English. For a French translation of 'Der Kommunismus', *Schweizerischer Republikaner* (2, 3, 13 June 1843), see my critical edition of Bakunin's early Hegelian texts, *Bakounine jeune Hegélien. La Philosophie et son Dehors* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2007), pp. 149–59.

out of France at Prussia's request in February 1845), and Polish patriotic émigrés.<sup>3</sup> Upon learning that he had been stripped of his aristocratic titles and condemned *in absentia* to life-long banishment in Siberia, Bakunin reacted in January 1845 by publishing an open letter in Eugène Baune and Ferdinand Flocon's influential republican newspaper *La Réforme*.<sup>4</sup> In this text, the first in which a Russian subject openly attacked the principle of autocracy, Bakunin rejoiced that he no longer belonged to a social order which, in any case, did not have any genuine political influence in Tsarist Russia, and he affirmed that a democratic revolution was possible in his native land. In November 1847, he spoke at a banquet held in honour of the seventeenth anniversary of the 1830 Polish insurrection and advocated a revolutionary alliance between the Russian and Polish peoples against the tsar.<sup>5</sup> At the request of the Russian ambassador in Paris, he was expelled to Belgium.

In spite of the political contacts that he had developed in Paris with French socialists, German democrats, and Polish émigrés, Bakunin appears to have led during this period the difficult life of a revolutionary without a cause. Whereas his texts from 1842–43 insisted on the imminence of revolution and the necessity of leaving the terrain of philosophy to act concretely in the practical world, Bakunin could not subsequently find an immediate outlet for his desire for action. If one is to believe his 1851 *Confession*, Bakunin seems to have concluded during this period that only two forces could extricate Western civilisation from its current decomposition: 'the rude, unenlightened people, called the mob', which 'has preserved in itself freshness and power', and the Slavic peoples, notably the Russian people, whose 'semi-barbaric nature', Bakunin had claimed in his article published in *La Réforme*, destined it for 'a great mission in the world'.<sup>6</sup> Despite his relations with German communists, Bakunin did not rally to their positions. Even though he was in regular contact with the editors of *Vorwärts* from July 1844 until when the journal was shut down, he was more of a circumspect observer of their activities than an active participant in them. Furthermore, when he

<sup>3</sup> For Bakunin's selectively retrospective account of his stay in Paris, see Bakunin, *The Confession of Mikhail Bakunin. With the Marginal Comments of Tsar Nicholas I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 44–52.

<sup>4</sup> On the importance of *La Réforme* in the French press on the eve of the February 1848 Revolution, see A. Lanza, 'Un républicanisme à tendance sociale. La Réforme de Baune et Flocon' in T. Bouchet, V. Bourdeau, E. Castleton, L. Frobert and F. Jarrige (eds.), *Quand les Socialistes inventaient l'avenir* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), pp. 158–66.

<sup>5</sup> On the context of this speech, and more generally on the subject of Bakunin's Polish relations, see H. Elsner, J. Grandjonc, E. Neu and H. Pelger, *Fragmente zu Internationalen Demokratischen Aktivitäten um 1848 (M. Bakunin, F. Engels, F. Mellinet u. a.)* (Trier: Schriften aus dem Karl-Marx-Haus n° 48, 2000), pp. 113–305.

<sup>6</sup> Bakunin, *The Confession*, p. 40 and *La Réforme*, 27 January 1845.

encountered Marx and his friends again in Belgium towards the end of 1847, they left a disagreeable impression on him.<sup>7</sup> It was thus improbable that the young Russian revolutionary would join forces with the German communists. That left distant Russia, which Bakunin hoped to reach via the intermediary of Poland, at the time territorially occupied in large part by the Tsarist Empire.

## II The Prague Slav Congress of June 1848

With such little prospects, Bakunin was struck by the news of the February Revolution in France. He immediately returned to Paris and plunged himself into the drunken political enthusiasm ubiquitous in the French capital. Bakunin's 1851 *Confession* vividly recounts this episode and constitutes one of the few sources of information about his activities during the 1848 Revolution in France.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, once the moment of euphoria had passed, Bakunin claimed that his place was not in Paris. As a Russian, he wanted a revolution in Russia, and much of the activity of Bakunin in the following months should be understood in the light of this objective, particularly the need to find, as Bakunin put it retrospectively in his *Confession*, 'an Archimedean fulcrum for action'.<sup>9</sup> In a 13 March 1848 letter published in *La Réforme*, he wrote: 'I am Russian, and my thoughts bear naturally on Russia. It is from there that one expects the initial wrath of reaction to emanate. It will come from there, but it will fall back on those who set it in motion.'<sup>10</sup>

For tactical, political, and personal reasons, it was the prospect of a Polish insurrection which initially preoccupied Bakunin during the period immediately following the February Revolution in Paris. Strategically, it was clear for someone who was, in many ways, the first revolutionary in Russian history, that the Poles constituted the principal geopolitical force of opposition to the tsar. Furthermore, for several months, Bakunin never ceased to remind his contemporaries that, as a Russian democrat, he considered the condition of the Russian and Polish peoples to be the same, and thus was compelled to advocate the emancipation of Poland. His only divergences with the Polish nationalists

<sup>7</sup> See Bakunin's late December 1847 letter to Georg Herwegh to this effect. Bakunin Papers, Saint Petersburg, IRL 28529 CC IV 27, or the Bakunin Papers CD-Rom available from the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

<sup>8</sup> For his description of his time in Paris during the February Revolution, see Bakunin, *The Confession*, pp. 54–8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67. The expression was used by Bakunin to describe why he decided to participate in the June 1848 Prague Slav Congress discussed below.

<sup>10</sup> *La Réforme*, 13 March 1848.



related to the boundaries of a future independent Poland. Against the opinion of many Polish patriots, Bakunin thought that such a state should only include those territories populated by ethnic Poles, and thus neither 'Little Russia' nor 'White Russia' (corresponding respectively to today's Ukraine and Belorussia). Finally, even though he tried to dissimulate its importance in his 1851 *Confession* addressed to the tsar, Bakunin had since 1844 been in repeated contact with Polish patriots, whose aspirations for national self-determination he both claimed to share and believed had to be encouraged were revolutionary action ever successfully to penetrate Russia.

At the beginning of April 1848, flush with a false passport furnished by Ledru-Rollin and funds raised by the Polish émigré community, Bakunin left Paris with the hopes of reaching the region of Poznan. The city of Poznan was under Prussian rule, but following the German Revolution in March, it rose up to declare itself for Polish independence. Bakunin never made it to the region, however, because he was arrested in Berlin and had to leave for Breslau (today known as Wrocław). From there, he found himself in the company of Polish émigrés at a congress held to discuss what to do in the wake of Poznan insurrection (the revolt, militarily led by General Ludwik Mierosławski, was crushed during the month of May 1848 by Prussian troops). To believe his *Confession*, Bakunin took no part in the congress debates, which mainly revolved around fissures within the Polish nationalist movement splitting democrats and aristocrats. From April onwards, Bakunin was a sceptical observer of the German Revolution, which he found too verbose and not active enough when it came to concrete political initiatives. Bakunin was favourable to German unification, provided it were within a republican framework (he felt the same way about Italian unification), and he boasted that he was popular enough in certain radical circles to help get his friend Ruge nominated in Breslau as a delegate to the Frankfurt National Assembly in May 1848, where he would sit with the far-left democratic representatives.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Bakunin thought that German democrats should openly advocate Polish independence. They should also be more sensitive to growing signs of a counter-revolutionary backlash throughout Europe – evident in the immediate wake of the failure of the Polish insurrection, the defeat of the Hecker Uprising in the Grand Duchy of Baden and the dissolution of the German Democratic Legion led by Georg Herwegh, and the eviction of far-left democrats from the Provisional Government in Paris after the demonstration of 15 May.

<sup>11</sup> Bakunin, *The Confession*, p. 66.

It was in Breslau that Bakunin heard about the Slav Congress to be held in Prague in the following weeks.<sup>12</sup> This Congress, initially designed only for Austrian Slavs as a sort of equivalent of the Frankfurt and Pest Assemblies, was in the end compelled to accept delegates from all the Slav populations, whether under Prussian, Austrian, Russian, or Turkish rule. In the historiography of the Revolutions of 1848, nationalist causes have often been overshadowed by those democratic and socialist causes which motivated revolutionaries, and perhaps partially for this reason, outside of Eastern Europe, the various Slavic uprisings have been the least studied. Yet it was within this exact framework that Bakunin agitated in June 1848.

Even though it was by default that Bakunin decided to participate in the Prague Slav Congress, he managed to find good reasons to attend. In 1848, the Austrian Empire was seen by many revolutionaries as the embodiment of everything they were fighting against. Regrouping Austria, Galicia, Hungary, Bohemia, Slovakia, Northern Italy, and Croatia, it was the 'prison of peoples' subsequently denounced at the end of the First World War.<sup>13</sup> Dominated by the Habsburg dynasty, it was considered to be, courtesy of Metternich's machinations, the principal artisan of the retrograde European political order put in place by the 1815 Vienna Settlement. Since March 1848, the Austrian Empire had come under attack on several fronts. Because of an uprising of workers and democrats in Vienna, the court had fled to Innsbruck. Metternich, forced to resign, went into exile in London, and a parliament was established. At the same time, the Austrian monarchy was confronted with an insurrection in Hungary, where Magyar leaders at first demanded their own parliament and an imperial constitution, but soon demanded outright independence – despite the opposition of Slavic minorities present on Hungarian territory, and would later play an important role in quashing the Magyar rebellion.

In the crescendo of revolution which marked the first half of 1848, the Czechs had sent Emperor Ferdinand a petition signed by various prominent bourgeois, intellectuals, students, and workers demanding the abolition of *corvées*, the reconstitution of the kingdom of Bohemia, and the same legal equality for Czechs as that granted ethnic Germans. Nevertheless, confronted with the explosive re-emergence of the

<sup>12</sup> See L. D. Orton, *The Prague Slav Congress of 1848* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the pertinence of the expression, 'prison of peoples', see J-P Bled, 'L'Autriche-Hongrie: un modèle de pluralisme national ?' in A. Liebich and A. Reszler (eds.), *L'Europe Centrale et ses Minorités: Vers une Solution Européenne?* (Paris, PUF, 1993), pp. 25–35.

German and Hungarian nationalist movements and the dangers their growth posed for resolving the demands of different Slav minorities within the Austrian Empire, partisans of the Slav cause were in a delicate position. At the initiative of the Czech historian František Palacký (1798–1876), Slavic elites wanted to organise a congress in Prague that might determine what a common future for the Slavic peoples of the Austrian Empire could look like. If one is to believe his 1851 *Confession*, Bakunin held no conception of pan-Slavic unity before this congress.<sup>14</sup> If true, then it was likely Bakunin's relative ignorance of pan-Slavism that caused him to believe, upon his discovery of this movement, that it had only just begun to flourish, whereas, in reality, for the composite ethnicities of the Austrian Empire, the Prague Slav Congress marked an important transition from the pan Slavist of the 1830s (which, by 1848, was only really defended by partisans of the tsar) to the Austro-Slavism of the 1860s (whose partisans sought to attain for the Slavs the same equal legal and political status from which Germans and Hungarians benefited).

It is without a doubt in Prague where Bakunin discovered the unifying role that Germanophobia played for the different Slavic groups of Central Europe and where his scheme of using nationalist passions towards revolutionary ends was born. Bakunin's own platform at Prague is contained in the text he presented at the congress: 'Fundamental Principles of the New Slav Politics'.<sup>15</sup> The first half of this manifesto, a patchwork of Hegelian references, affirmed that the Slavic peoples, 'the last to arrive in the march of European civilisation', were destined to be the people who go furthest in emancipation and realise the 'final end of humanity'. Much like Marx had done with regard to 'the proletariat' four years previously in his article on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* published in the only issue of the Paris-based *Deutsche-französische Jahrbücher*,<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For example, Bakunin, *The Confession*, pp. 67–69. However, while in Brussels preparing a second discourse in favour of a Russo-Polish revolutionary alliance in January 1848, Bakunin wrote to the Polish émigré Michał Lempicki that his forthcoming speech would be 'directed particularly against Pan-Slavism and [would contain] a revolutionary appeal to Russians'. See Elsner et al., *Fragmente*, p. 265. This would seem to constitute some proof that Bakunin was at least conscious that Pan-Slavism was pro-Russian at the time.

<sup>15</sup> Written in French (no doubt co-authored with other democratic participants in the Prague Congress), 'Principes fondamentaux de la nouvelle politique slave', has been published for the first time in my critical edition, *La Liberté des Peuples: Bakounine et les Révolutions de 1848* (Lyon: Atelier de Création Libertaire, 2009), pp. 92–95. The English-language translation given in the anthology edited by S. Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchism* (New York: Vintage, 1972), pp. 63–68, is both incomplete and philologically inadequate (giving no indication to unknowing readers from what draft or published version it was derived).

<sup>16</sup> See Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (henceforth *MECW*) (New York: International Publishers, 1975), vol. III, pp. 175–87.

Bakunin considered the Slavs to be at once the most oppressed national-ethnic group and the one whose particular liberation necessarily would signal the emancipation of all other peoples. In the same part of 'Fundamental Principles' in which he made these claims, Bakunin juxtaposed the mechanistic unity imposed by states and empires that imprisoned the Slavs with the vital, living, and natural political life which the Slavic populations were called upon to realise, and he estimated that 'the new politics of the Slavic race [would] not be a politics of states but a politics of nations, a politics of free and independent peoples'. Nevertheless, he also underscored the need for strong unity among the Slavic peoples, whereas before they only sought their salvation in isolation from one another, engaging in fratricidal wars, allowing themselves even to be used as instruments of repression against one another. Bakunin's position makes some political sense when seen in light of the internal divisions and ethnic tensions that were well apparent during the Prague Congress, and which Bakunin described three years later in his 1851 *Confession*: 'everyone was pulling in his own direction and wished to make of the others a steppingstone for his own advancement'.<sup>17</sup> For such reasons, the congress 'just like all other contemporary congresses, and political gatherings . . . was decidedly empty and meaningless'.<sup>18</sup>

Was Bakunin an 'anarchist' in 1848? Besides the fact that he did not declare himself to be one until almost twenty years later, the two other parts of 'Fundamental Principles' that comprised Bakunin's concrete political project would suggest otherwise. This text effectively foresaw in its second half, in parallel with the independence of all Slavic peoples, their common submission to a Slav Council charged with resolving their differences. The Council would alone be granted the right to declare war or to make alliances with foreign powers (even though each Slavic ethnic group had the duty to come to the defence of any other Slavic people, were the latter attacked). It is easy to infer from this sketch of a federal constitution constituted along ethno-cultural lines the sorts of nationalist dissensions present at the Prague Congress which Bakunin's sketch aimed to circumvent when he declared any hegemonic attempt by one Slavic people to dominate another a crime against all (Bakunin had in mind the Czechs) or when he forbade any nationality to wage war on its own initiative against a foreign power (like the General Josip Jelačić von Buzim, who wanted his Croatian forces to crush the Hungarians with

<sup>17</sup> Bakunin, *The Confession*, p. 72. Bakunin particularly singled out Czech and Polish participants in this regard.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69. In the same text, Bakunin recounted how he wanted to give the pan-Slavist movement a dictatorial allure in order to pre-empt internal divisions and the co-optation of Central European movements for national emancipation by bourgeois Slavs.

the support of the Austrian emperor). On the other hand, the internal constitutions that each people was supposed to adopt were founded on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity; banished aristocratic privileges; guaranteed the access of all to a share of national property; and distinguished nationality from citizenship (such that a Slovakian Croat might have Croat nationality but Slovak citizenship).

The position adopted by Bakunin at the Prague Slav Congress had few followers, even if Bakunin retrospectively thought that he had contributed to giving the congress a more pan-Slavist and liberal tone (absent a more democratic one). The congress came to an unexpected end on 12 June 1848 with the outbreak of an insurrection led by students and workers in Prague. As Bakunin recounted in his 1851 *Confession*, when he found out the day before that an insurrection was imminent, he tried 'to persuade the students to refrain from an impossible undertaking and not give the Austrian troops an opportunity for an easy victory'.<sup>19</sup> Bakunin's fears were well grounded: the uprising was crushed by the troops of General Alfred Windischgrätz who, enraged by the accidental death of his wife, killed by a stray bullet coming from his own troops, bombarded the city until its surrender on 17 June. Yet Bakunin's reluctance did not prevent him from actively participating in the Prague insurrection, for which he would be subsequently indicted during his later trial in Austria in 1850.

### **III Bakunin's Appeal to the Slavs and Engels' 'Democratic Pan-Slavism'**

In the months following the Prague Slav Congress, Bakunin returned to Germany and, in spite of the political turmoil there and the numerous expulsions which it provoked, moved between Dresden, Breslau, and Berlin, before settling in Dessau, in the small duchy of Anhalt-Köthen. It was there that in October 1848 he wrote his *Appeal to the Slavs by a Russian Patriot*, the text most representative of the objectives and contradictions of his actions during the 1848 revolutionary period.<sup>20</sup> Because this same text was also subjected to extensive criticism by Friedrich Engels in the pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, it can be interpreted as the first confrontation between the competing revolutionary visions of Bakunin and Marx and his friends and allies.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>20</sup> For two versions of this text, see *La Liberté des Peuples*, pp. 97–132, as well as my analysis of Bakunin's *Appeal* in *Ibid.*, pp. 27–60.

Bakunin's *Appeal* was written during a particularly difficult period for European revolutionaries – one marked by the quashing of the Prague insurrection, the June Days in Paris, and the calculated exploitation by the Austrian imperial government of Slavic nationalism against various democratic movements. For Bakunin in particular, it was a time marked by accusations, repeated in the pages of Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in its 6 July 1848 issue, that Bakunin was a spy in the pay of the Russian government.<sup>21</sup> At the request of his friend, Hermann Müller-Strübing (1812–93), Bakunin spent more than a month writing his *Appeal to the Slavs*, which would first be published in German in December 1848 and then in French in January 1849 (in the pages of *La Réforme*). The initial draft of Bakunin's *Appeal*, written in French, as well as the subsequent drafts of the same text, reveal the difficulties Bakunin had both in defining what he thought exactly about the political situation in autumn 1848 and in determining how committed European revolutionaries might influence this situation on the basis of his own fluid assessment. Bakunin's intentions appear clearly in the preamble of the *Appeal*: he was calling on the Slavs of Central Europe to choose between two opposing sides – revolution or counter-revolution – leaving no middle way (notably of a diplomatic nature) possible. Thus, he sought to transform the Slav cause into a revolutionary cause. In affirming that there was 'no middle road', Bakunin reiterated the refusal of mediation which characterised his 1842 article, 'The Reaction in Germany'. In reality, his *Appeal* aimed less to identify a clear and existing opposition between two inviolable political camps than about how to arrive at such an opposition. In this work, as in the two longer texts that he wrote during his subsequent imprisonment ('My Defence'<sup>22</sup> and the *Confession*), Bakunin affirmed

<sup>21</sup> These rumours were initially propagated by the Russian government itself around the time it succeeded in getting the government of the July Monarchy to expel Bakunin from France at the end of 1847. They were partially effective in influencing opinion in the milieu of Polish patriots. Despite Marx's denial of any responsibility for these rumours when they met in London in 1862, Bakunin always remained convinced that Marx had been at the source of the charges of espionage levelled in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. For Marx's 2 August 1848 retraction of the slanderous charges in the pages of the same paper, see 'Bakunin' in *MECW*, vol. VII, pp. 315–16. For a complete dossier on the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*'s charges in French translation, including Bakunin's reactions to them, see Arthur Lehning's anthology, *Michel Bakounine et l'Italie, 1871–1872. Deuxième Partie. La Première Internationale en Italie et le Conflit avec Marx*, in M. Bakunin, *Œuvres Complètes*, 8 vols. (Paris: Champ Libre, 1974 [1963]) vol. II, pp. 331–34.

<sup>22</sup> 'My defence' was written in German and entitled *Meine Verteidigung*. It was originally published in Vaclav Čejchan, *Bakunin v Čechách* (Prague: Vojenský archiv RČS, 1928), pp. 101–89. I included the French translation, done by the International Institute of Social History (where most of Bakunin's papers are held) in my edition, *La Liberté des Peuples*, pp. 163–226.

that the common target of revolutionaries should be the destruction of the Austrian Empire as both the living symbol of all forms of oppression and the chief representative of imperial domination. If Bakunin singularly targeted Austria, he cautioned Central European Slavs against the temptation of placing their hopes in another empire such as Russia.<sup>23</sup>

All the different versions of the *Appeal* contain a description of the revolutionary ebb and flow of 1848. For the flow, which since the February Revolution in Paris had carried away everything with it as it went, Bakunin cast the Prague Congress in the most radical light possible by underscoring his own propositions. For the ebb, the dissolution of the Slav Congress had been one of the first manifestations. This revolutionary ebb and flow of expansion and contraction was identified in the German-language version of Bakunin's *Appeal* with the action of spirit in Hegel's philosophy of history. When Bakunin called on the Slavs to let themselves be carried away by the flow of the revolution, the latter was identified with 'the new spirit, with its dissolving spirit' which 'had irrevocably penetrated humanity'. This spirit 'digs down into European society until its deepest and darkest layers'. Bakunin's recourse to Hegel was a way of guaranteeing that the revolution had not ended in defeat, but, like a mole, had simply gone deep underground: continuing to burrow at the roots of the old world, it would soon re-emerge in the light of day.<sup>24</sup> The revolutionary ebb, described in the *Appeal*, was seen at work in the counter-revolutionary instrumentalisation of nationalist sentiment against the democratic revolutions of Vienna and Pest: it was the Croats, thus the Slavs, who had attacked Hungary during the summer, and it was the Czechs who had bombed Prague under the orders of Windischgrätz in June 1848.

In the published version of the *Appeal*, Bakunin limited himself to discussing the national reaction against democracy. This represented a clear shrinking of his initial project, for the German-language published version of the *Appeal* removed the place Bakunin initially granted the social question in the original French-language manuscript version from which it was drawn. In the first draft of his *Appeal to Slav Peoples*, Bakunin showed how revolution served a dual purpose: the internal emancipation of peoples (the social and democratic question) and their external

<sup>23</sup> There is a violent attack on Tsar Nicholas I's Russia in the *Appeal*. See *La Liberté des Peuples*, pp. 125–30.

<sup>24</sup> This image, which is often attributed to Marx because he subsequently used it in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, constituted Bakunin's own elliptical appropriation of Hegel's use (in his *Lectures the History of Philosophy*) of the passage in *Hamlet* (Act 1, scene 5) wherein Hamlet, addressing the ghost of his father, exclaims: 'Well done, old mole!'



emancipation (the question of nationalities) – and how reactionary political forces had taken advantage of the different ends of these two goals. In certain cases (notably Poland), the forces of reaction had crushed a national uprising by sparking tensions between different social categories, while in others (notably, the Viennese insurrection) they had used ethnic uprisings to crush a democratic and social revolution. In still other cases, the reaction had mobilised the invidious potential of the social and national questions: the hatred of the Austrian empire shared by different ethnic groups could be turned into hatred of the composite ethnic groups of Austria against each other (i.e. Croats against Hungarians), and the democratic aspirations shared by both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie could disintegrate before the divisions separating those two classes (i.e. as in France during the 1848 June Days in Paris). Many initial variants of the first draft of the *Appeal* went on even to underscore the inherently counter-revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie, whose ‘happiness is the inverse proportion to the liberty of peoples’ and which, by its nature as a class, seeks protection in despots. However, in the version Bakunin finally published in German, any allusion to the social question entirely disappeared. Because contemporaries were visibly weary of the imminence of a social confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Bakunin decided to spare the former. Nor was he alone: many revolutionaries did this at the time insofar as it was a tactic which allowed one to focus more exclusively on the national and political question, while leaving unresolved those social tensions contained within this question.

The German version of the *Appeal* was published in December 1848 and quickly inspired a response from Marx’s entourage in a two-part article by Engels, ‘Democratic Pan-Slavism’, published in the 15 and 16 February 1849 issues of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.<sup>25</sup> Having first affirmed that ‘Bakunin is our friend’, Engels launched into a violent attack on Bakunin’s *Appeal*. Engels’ articles levelled two major criticisms. On the one hand, he denounced the chimerical aspirations of Bakunin (which were also those of the 1848 Revolutions) and underscored those invariable obstacles that political realities would pose to their realisation – a point Bakunin, himself, later acknowledged in his 1851 *Confession*. On the other, among those obstacles identified by Engels was the inherently counter-revolutionary character of the Slavic peoples, which prevented them from having any national future or from participating in the unfolding of universal history except through German (and possibly Hungarian) domination. This second line of

<sup>25</sup> F. Engels, ‘Democratic Pan-Slavism’ in *MECW*, vol. VIII, pp. 362–78.

argument implied a conception of universal history as a civilising process in which the Slavs were a population which needed civilising. In his two-part article, Engels even drew a comparison with the recent annexation of California from Mexico by the United States and tried to show that two sovereign peoples could not necessarily fraternise with one another when their relative degrees of civilisation differed too greatly. For this reason, the United States had undertaken against Mexico a war 'waged wholly and solely in the interest of civilisation' to the extent it had caused 'splendid California' to be 'taken away from the lazy Mexicans'.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, Engels' article contrasts with an earlier one he published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on 17 June 1848 following the quashing of the Prague uprising by Austrian imperial troops.<sup>27</sup> At the time, it was not the Slavs who were 'the main instruments of the counter-revolutionaries',<sup>28</sup> but the Germans, who constituted 'a nation which throughout its history has allowed itself to be used as a tool of oppression against all other nations'.<sup>29</sup> To which Engels added: 'A revolutionised Germany ought to have renounced her entire past, especially as far as the neighbouring countries are concerned. Together with her own freedom, [Germany] should have proclaimed the freedom of the nations hitherto suppressed by her'.<sup>30</sup> But by February 1849, Engels had concluded that there were certain revolutionary peoples destined to play a civilising role in world history identical with the expansion of capitalism, revolutionary peoples diametrically opposed to counter-revolutionary peoples 'which have never had a history of their own',<sup>31</sup> and whose mode of production was pre-capitalist and, for this reason, were condemned to be civilised by superior peoples. In Engels' article, this discriminatory opposition was at play in a panegyric to the Germans for 'having given themselves the trouble of civilising the stubborn Czechs and Slovenes, and introducing among them trade, industry, a tolerable degree of agriculture, and culture!'<sup>32</sup> The destiny of the Slavic peoples, whose long-standing submission to ethnic groups like the Hungarians or the Germans

<sup>26</sup> Engels, 'Democratic Pan-Slavism', p. 365. Interestingly, Bakunin, certainly unaware of Engels' two-part article, had himself argued around the same time that the territorial expansion of the United States on the North American continent was occurring 'in the interest of civilisation, democracy, and labour'. See either Čejchan, *Bakunin v Čechách*, p. 119, or *La Liberté des Peuples*, p. 173.

<sup>27</sup> Engels, 'The Prague Uprising' *MECW*, vol. VII, pp. 91–93.

<sup>28</sup> Engels, 'Democratic Pan-Slavism' *MECW*, vol. VIII, p. 372. Engels continued: 'Oppressed at home, outside their country, wherever Slav influence extended to, they were the oppressors of all revolutionary nations.'

<sup>29</sup> Engels, 'The Prague Uprising' *MECW*, vol. VII, p. 92.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>31</sup> Engels, 'Democratic Pan-Slavism' *MECW*, vol. VIII, p. 367.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

‘sufficiently proves which was the more viable and vigorous’ of ethnicities, could be summarised in the following invidious alternative: either the inferior Slavic peoples should throw themselves into capitalist development under the guidance of ‘us and the other revolutionary nations of Europe’ (i.e. the Germans, the Poles, and the Magyar Hungarians), or they would fall victim to Ottoman expansion.<sup>33</sup> Cast this way by Engels, the Slavs appeared like the world-historical ethno-cultural equivalent of the *Lumpenproletariat* in Marx’s more socio-economic schema of class struggle.<sup>34</sup>

Even though Bakunin was unaware of Engels’ article, some of the arguments mobilised by Engels were sufficiently commonplace for Bakunin later to formulate an indirect response to them in his 1850 manuscript, written in German and composed while in prison, ‘My Defence’ (*Meine Verteidigung*). In this text, Bakunin argued that in Austria, 8 million Germans would have insurmountable difficulties germanicising the remaining 30 million of the population (of which 16 million were Slavs). He proposed a different alternative from that suggested by Engels: either the Germans accept the emancipation of the Slavic peoples, or the latter should turn towards Russia, such that the Slavic ‘wedge’ which constituted Bohemia in the middle of greater Germany could transform itself into an even more menacing Russian ‘wedge’.<sup>35</sup>

For Engels, however, the Slav democrats who, like Bakunin, sought to rally the Austrian Slavs to revolution and have them turn against the Austrian Empire were either mere nationalists disguised as revolutionaries or naïve souls who had been deceived, reminding Engels of ‘a hen which despairingly circles the edge of a pond where the young ducklings which she has hatched out now suddenly escape from her into a totally foreign element into which she cannot follow them’.<sup>36</sup> The veracity of such accusations aside, in many ways the differences between Bakunin and Engels on the Slav question can be considered the first version of the conflict, several years later, which would pit Bakunin against Marx and his allies over the question of historical necessity. From 1849 onwards, Engels stressed that history followed a necessary course, in which

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 370 and 377.

<sup>34</sup> This comparison has been suggested by B. P. Hepner in his *Bakounine et le Panславisme Révolutionnaire* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1948), p. 279.

<sup>35</sup> The ethno-topographic image of a Slavic ‘wedge’ caught between German and Magyar peoples, interfering with the construction of a greater Germany and impossibly separate, as an ethnic bloc, from the Southern Slavs of the Austrian Empire, is mentioned repeatedly by Engels in ‘Democratic Pan-Slavism’, pp. 367–9. Bakunin reverses Engels’ focus, recasting such a supposed wedge in the light of geopolitics to the east in ‘My Defence’, *La Liberté des Peuples*, p. 219.

<sup>36</sup> Engels, ‘Democratic Pan-Slavism’, p. 377.

‘nothing is achieved without violence and implacable ruthlessness’,<sup>37</sup> and civilisation invariably had to experience a capitalist mode of production and state centralisation. Praise for capitalist civilisation by the communist Engels was inscribed within a conception of history, put forth in the *Communist Manifesto*, in which the capitalist mode of production would give birth dialectically to communist society. If Bakunin would later oppose this overarching historical vision, it is difficult not to note already the national tenor of those differences separating Engels (and, by extension, Marx) from Bakunin. The end of Engels’ 1849 article was particularly violent: its author threatened the Slavic peoples with an “*inexorable life-and-death struggle*” against those Slavs who betray the revolution’, and endorsed ‘an annihilating fight and ruthless terror – not in the interests of Germany, but in the interests of the revolution’, reminding readers that ‘hatred of Russians was and still is the *primary revolutionary passion* among the Germans’.<sup>38</sup>

Without exactly endorsing the transformation of Slavic Germanophobia into revolutionary passion, Bakunin did underscore how it constituted its principal nationalist foundation. Belief that the political centralisation of Germany was a correlate of economic development was bound to become a source of conflict between Marx and Bakunin. On 20 July 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, Marx revealingly wrote to Engels: ‘The French deserve a good hiding. If the Prussians win, centralisation of the STATE POWER will be useful for the centralisation of the German working class. German predominance would then shift the centre of gravity of the West European workers’ movement from France to Germany, and you need only to compare developments in the two countries from 1866 to the present day to realise that the German working class is superior to the French both in theory and organisation. Its predominance over the French on the international stage would also mean the predominance of *our* theory over Proudhon’s, etc.’<sup>39</sup> For his part, Bakunin would never cease to believe that Bismarck’s political centralisation of Germany was the principal geopolitical threat to democratic socialism in Europe, best embodied in the French revolutionary tradition.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378; emphasis in the original. For an examination of Engels’ anti-Slavic prejudices in comparison with Bakunin, see both my own summary in *La Liberté des Peuples*, pp. 51–60, as well as Roman Rosdolsky’s classic, albeit polemical, study, *Engels and the ‘Nonhistoric’ Peoples: The National Question in the Revolutions of 1848* (Glasgow: Critique Books, 1987 [1979]).

<sup>39</sup> *MECW*, vol. XLIV, pp. 3–4.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, Bakunin’s remark, in his August–September 1870 ‘Lettre à un Français’, reproduced in its original manuscript form by Lehning in Bakunin, *La Guerre Franco-Allemande et la Révolution Sociale en France, 1870–1871*, published in

Nor was Bakunin's underscoring of the solidarity between empires so far-fetched at the time. In February 1849, Russian troops entered Transylvania to help crush the Hungarian insurrection. Retrospectively, in terms of geopolitical realism, however, Bakunin's subsequent trajectory during the revolutionary period of 1848–49 would seem at least partly to confirm Engels' overall assessment. If Bakunin's *Appeal* was particularly noticed by Western European readers, it had little impact on the Central European Slavic populations to which it was addressed. This did not prevent Bakunin from actively continuing to prepare for an insurrection in Bohemia with Czech democrats from Leipzig, where he secretly arrived in January 1849. Back in Dresden in April, Bakunin published a series of four articles subsequently entitled, in the form of an anonymous pamphlet, 'The Situation of Russia' (*Russische Zustände*).<sup>41</sup> In this work, Bakunin at once sought to inform a German readership of its true adversary, Russian autocracy, as well as to raise German consciousness of the revolutionary potential of Russia. While recognising the inherently reactionary role played by the Russian Empire in European history, he wanted to underscore the fragile nature of tsarist power, which in his opinion explained Russian intervention in the 1848 Revolutions. Moreover, Bakunin asserted that the relative weakness of intermediary powers between the tsar and the elements such as the church or the aristocracy made the likelihood of a confrontation between the Russian state and the Russian population increasingly probable, especially given popular aspirations for emancipation. In particular, the last article in the series contained an analysis of the opposition of the Russian state's mechanistic brutality to the organic life of peoples, which is especially interesting in the light of Bakunin's subsequent trajectory.

On 3 May 1849, Bakunin was still conspiring with a group of young Czech revolutionaries on organising an insurrection in Bohemia when an uprising broke out in Dresden. The king of Saxony had rejected the federal constitution proposed by the Frankfurt Assembly and approved by the Saxon Diet, and had called on the Prussian army to impose order in his kingdom. Saxon troops had shot on crowds attempting to seize

*Œuvres Complètes*, vol. VII, p. 82: 'Imagine Prussia, Bismarck's Germany, instead of the France of 1793, instead of that France we have all been waiting for, which we still are waiting today to initiate the Social Revolution!'

<sup>41</sup> The first two articles of *Russische Zustände*, were published in German in the *Dresdner Zeitung* (12 and 14 April 1849), and the second two were added after Bakunin's arrest to form an anonymous pamphlet published in Leipzig. For the complete text in German, seemingly written first in French, see Bakunin, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Band 3, *Russische Zustände* (Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 1996). A French translation, taking into account French-language manuscript variants, can be found in my *La Liberté des Peuples*, pp. 136–62.

weapons from the local arsenal, and the city was quickly covered in barricades. The king fled to Königstein, and a provisional revolutionary government was constituted. Even though he did not play a part in the initial uprising, Bakunin took an increasingly active role in it as a military advisor to compensate for what he took to be the gross unpreparedness and incompetence of the new government. Ironically, much of Bakunin's subsequent fame across Europe came from his vigorous and energetic actions in this insurrection, one which he neither planned nor initiated but fell into, almost accidentally, much like the relatively moderate middle-class Saxon democrats who, protesting against what they took to be an abuse of royal prerogative, found themselves at the head of Dresden's new revolutionary government.<sup>42</sup> Barely armed and badly outnumbered, the unwitting revolutionaries were quickly crushed by the Prussian and Saxon troops. Bakunin organised the retreat of some of the remaining insurgents from the city, but exhausted, and after having attempted in vain to convince his comrades to march to Bohemia, he was arrested with his band of unlikely bourgeois revolutionaries in Chemnitz on the night of 9–10 May 1849.

#### **IV The Impact of the Revolutions of 1848–49 on Bakunin**

Thus began for Bakunin a long period of waiting through imprisonment, indictment, trial, sentencing, and more incarceration, which would compel him to re-examine the biographical trajectory leading up to his arrest. First imprisoned in the Dresden prison, he was then transferred on 29 August 1849 to the Königstein Fortress (where, ironically, the Saxon king had fled during the original insurrection). After several months of interrogation, he was condemned to death on 14 January 1850. In prison conditions which were much better than what he would subsequently be subjected to in the Austria Empire (first in Prague, then in a fortress in the Moravian town of Olmütz) and Russia (at the notorious Peter-and-Paul Fortress in Saint Petersburg), Bakunin wrote a long manuscript addressed to his lawyer in order to make a plea for commuting his death sentence. Despite its title, the German-language manuscript, 'My Defence', is less an appeal for clemency than the justification of

<sup>42</sup> The attribution of the role of leader of the Dresden insurrection to Bakunin was notably made by no less than Engels in one of the articles ('Petty Traders', 2 October 1852) of his series, 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany' published in the *New York Daily Tribune*: 'They [the insurgents of Dresden] found an able and cool-headed commander in the Russian refugee Michael Bakunin [...]' *MECW*, vol. XI, p. 90. Bakunin's role in the Dresden uprising were notably discussed in the memoirs of Richard Wagner, who also was an active participant in the insurrection.

a sincere revolutionary's acts cast through the lens of geopolitical considerations. It is possible that Bakunin sought to justify his actions before a German audience by dwelling on the social and political situation of his own native country, a strategy which led him to expand upon many of the points made months earlier in his articles on 'The Situation of Russia'. In this regard, 'My Defence' constitutes at once a concentrated synthesis of Bakunin's analysis of Russia since the middle of the 1840s and an original examination hinting at points he would make twenty years later, this time in French, in his unwieldy and incomplete 1870–71 work, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*.<sup>43</sup> Initially, Bakunin described the Russian people in his 'Defence' as being at once the slaves of autocracy and the executioners of other peoples, allowing him then to assert that the liberty of all oppressed peoples was interconnected with that of the Russian people. Bakunin described the Russian state as an exploitative machine, built upon the model of the seventeenth-century German state and artificially imposed upon the organic life of the Russian people. The Russian state appeared like a force of expansion which fed off the vitality of its people, indefinitely enlarging its territory outwards, and unable to behave otherwise. The principal difference between this text and those from the later 'anarchist' period of Bakunin's writings from the late 1860s and early 1870s lies in his more limited application of this anti-statist analysis to Russia alone.

The second half of 'My Defence' was about Germany. Bakunin's strategy of defence clearly aimed at showing that a genuine Russian democrat was necessarily in favour of German unification, whereas Russian autocracy consistently sought to prevent the emergence of a new European power. In these pages, Bakunin lamented the incapacity of the Germans to constitute themselves seriously as a unitary people capable of playing a role in universal history, and castigated them for their propensity to disperse themselves in small groupings rather than concentrating their energies within a single ethno-cultural bloc. Again, it is difficult not to draw a parallel with later 'anarchist' texts by Bakunin about Germany, in which he would insist on the incapacity of the German people to achieve ethno-political unity democratically, from the bottom up, without having recourse to a strong German state (which Bakunin predicted would be Prussia already in 1850) that would realise pan-Germanist unification through military conquest. This last scenario was

<sup>43</sup> The entirety of the fragmentary manuscript, *L'Empire knouto-germanique et la révolution sociale en France* (portions of which were published in Switzerland with the title, *La Révolution Sociale ou la Dictature Militaire* in 1871, and then posthumously, in 1882, as *Dieu et l'État*), were published in Bakunin, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. VIII.



imagined in 'My Defence' as regrettably more likely than the democratic or voluntary unification of hundreds of small German states.

On 6 June 1850, the death sentence Bakunin had been given was commuted to one of life imprisonment, although the Kingdom of Saxony transferred Bakunin only a week later to the Austrian authorities who wanted to try Bakunin for his participation in the Prague insurrection of June 1848 and for his conspiratorial planning of an insurrection in Bohemia in the spring of 1849. Imprisoned first in Prague and then transferred to the Moravian fortress of Olmütz in March 1851, Bakunin experienced extremely harsh prison conditions. Chained to a wall and deprived of air and light, his physical and psychological state began to deteriorate. He received a second death sentence on 15 May 1851, which was immediately commuted to life imprisonment, only to be transferred again, this time to his native country, which had already condemned him in 1844. Sparing him a third trial, Bakunin was directly imprisoned in the Peter-and-Paul Fortress of Saint Petersburg on 23 May 1851. It was here that Bakunin wrote his *Confession*, directly addressed to Tsar Nicholas I, in which he retraced those different factors which led him actively to participate in the Revolutions of 1848–49. Read and annotated by the tsar who had requested Bakunin write it, this exceptional document, unearthed in the wake of the 1917 Revolution, was subsequently subjected to intense partisan scrutiny, in which variations in interpretation depended almost entirely on its reader's desire to defend or condemn a figure by then long identified with revolutionary anarchism.<sup>44</sup> It is true that the deference towards the tsar that Bakunin accorded in many passages in his *Confession* is not very flattering retrospectively for Bakunin's image as a wild-eyed revolutionary, but then it is equally comprehensible why someone who was for a long time the only living Russian revolutionary would want to win over the tsar in the tactical

<sup>44</sup> The manner in which Bakunin's *Confession* was published in France nicely illustrates these two extreme positions. It was first translated from Russian and edited in 1932 by the anarchists Paulette and Fritz Brupbacher, with footnotes by Max Nettlau. After the war, it was retranslated and published as an appendix to a polemical work written by one of the leaders of the French Communist Party, J. Duclos, *Bakounine et Marx. Ombre et Lumière* (Paris: Plon, 1974). Duclos interpreted Bakunin's *Confession* as constituting 'the pathetic rejection of his militant action', p. 41. Duclos' accusations bear similarities with the polemical hatchet-job of another French post-war communist, Georges Cogniot. Cogniot's book on Proudhon's attitude to Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte in the immediate wake of the 2 December 1851 Coup d'État, *Proudhon et la Démagogie Bonapartiste: Un Socialiste en Coquetterie avec le Pouvoir Personnel* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1958), likewise attempted to debunk – similarly through charges of apostasy – a canonical figure definitively associated by the twentieth century with the ideology of 'anarchism'. On Proudhon's relations to L.N. Bonaparte during the 1848–52 period, see E. Castleton, 'The many revolutions of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon', [Chapter 2](#) of this volume.

interest of gaining Nicolas' clemency. And if Bakunin seized the occasion presented to him by the tsar to analyse his own evolution and the reasons for his failure to achieve his political aims, he never gave any information that might compromise or incriminate his conspiratorial associates or fellow travellers in revolution.

One of the most striking things about Bakunin's *Confession* is its author's apparent unwillingness to question the validity of his prior revolutionary agenda.<sup>45</sup> This inflexibility could have been due as much to the experience of prison, never very favourable to genuine self-criticism, as to the particular circumstances which brought to a halt Bakunin's revolutionary career. Whereas he had been singularly focused on promoting democratic revolutions in the Slavic countries of Central Europe, Bakunin had been arrested for his participation in one of the last insurrections of the German Revolution. The result was that he could not bring to fruition his own revolutionary agenda for Central Europe's Slavs. Indeed, it is possible that his arrest struck him as a sort of accident. This might explain why he took up more or less the same revolutionary agenda he subscribed to in 1848–49 after his subsequent escape from Siberian exile in 1861, before inflecting it through the lens of anarchism after 1864, in the wake of the failure of yet another Central European Slavic insurrection.

After having written his *Confession*, Bakunin remained until spring 1854 at the Peter-and-Paul Fortress. From 1853 onwards, he suffered from scurvy, lost all of his teeth, and his physical appearance declined radically. Fearing an attack on the capital during the Crimean War, the government transferred him to the Schlisselburg Fortress, east of Saint Petersburg on the shores of Lake Ladoga. In 1855, Tsar Nicholas I died, and his successor, Alexander II, decided in 1857 in a spirit of clemency to commute Bakunin's sentence to perpetual banishment to Siberia. Bakunin left prison on 8 March 1857, and, after having briefly visited his family, was moved to Tomsk, where he met the 17-year-old Antonia Kwiatkowski, whom he married in March 1859 and with whom he left for Irkutsk. Having progressively obtained more and more freedom of movement (partly because of a family connection relation to the governor general of Eastern Siberia, Nicholas Muraviev, second cousin from his

<sup>45</sup> This apparent absence of self-criticism was further confirmed by a characteristic letter – written in French from his prison cell at the Peter-and-Paul Fortress – which Bakunin secretly gave his sister Tatyana in February 1854. In this clandestine missive, Bakunin affirmed that he was only able to survive the isolation of prison by hoping to have 'the power to begin anew that which led me here, only perhaps with more wisdom and foresight'. See M. Bakunin, '*Dans les griffes de l'Ours!*': *Lettres de Prisons et de Déportation (1849–1861)* (Paris: Les Nuits Rouges, 2010), p. 135.

mother's side), Bakunin gained salaried employment in a trading company. In this capacity, he took part in an expedition to the mouth of the river Amur on the Pacific Ocean during June and early July 1861 with the intention of escaping Siberia. Managing to hop aboard an American sailing vessel, he arrived, first in Hakodate, Japan, on 14 August, then in Yokohama, on 24 August, from whence he left for the United States, docking at San Francisco on 3 October, then at New York (via the Isthmus of Panama) on 15 November. Having gathered the funds necessary to cross the Atlantic, Bakunin left the United States on 14 December, and arrived in Liverpool on the 27th of the same month to turn up, shortly thereafter, unannounced at Herzen's London residence.<sup>46</sup>

During his stay in the United States, Bakunin wrote to Herzen (3 October 1861) that he was planning to busy himself again with 'the Polish Slavonic cause, which has been my *idée fixe* since 1846 and was in practice my speciality in 1848 and 1849', and he added, in a turn of phrase idiomatically reminiscent of his language from twelve years previously, 'the destruction, the complete destruction, of the Austrian Empire will be my last word'.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, during the first two years subsequent to his escape, Bakunin seems to have sought to pick up where he had left off his revolutionary activity in 1849.<sup>48</sup> This comes through in both many of the texts he wrote in either pamphlet form or for Herzen's *Kolokol* about Russia and the Slavic question in 1862 as well as in his attempts to involve himself in the 1863 Polish insurrection and his articles in the Swedish press from that time.<sup>49</sup> It was only after the failure of the Polish insurrection that Bakunin began to call into question the possibility of transforming patriotic nationalist uprisings into revolutionary movements. Beginning in 1864, Bakunin began to criticise what he called nationalist

<sup>46</sup> On Bakunin's arrival and subsequent stay at Herzen's house in London, see Herzen's account in the Constance Garnett English-language translation of *My Past and Thoughts*, 6 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1926), vol. V, pp. 131–60; and N. A. Ogaryov-Tutchkov's account in her memoirs translated by Garnett and included in *My Past and Thoughts*, vol. VI, pp. xl–xlviii. For the fullest account in English based on Russian sources of Bakunin's stay at Herzen's house, see E.H. Carr's still amusing *Michael Bakunin* (New York: Vintage, 1961 [1937]), pp. 251–94.

<sup>47</sup> Bakunin added: 'to promote it, I am ready to become a drummer-boy or even a rascal, and if I should succeed in advancing it by one hair's-breadth I shall be satisfied. And after that will come the glorious free Slav federation, the one way out for Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, and the Slavonic peoples more generally.' Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, vol. V, p. 131.

<sup>48</sup> A point first made by Herzen, *Ibid.*, pp. 131–32, among many others. See also Carr's account in *Bakunin*, especially pp. 251–53.

<sup>49</sup> For an anthology of Bakunin's writings from this period in French translation (largely done by the International Institute of Social History), see R. M. Berthier (ed.), *Michel Bakunin, Textes sur la Question Slave et l'Europe du Nord, 1862–1864* (Éditions des Sorbiers, n.d.).

radicalism, and, in this vein, he wrote his first revolutionary programmes characterised by an avowedly federalist and anti-statist socialism. From 1867 onwards, his writings took on a more seemingly explicit anarchist tenor, and Bakunin the radical Hegelian pan-Slavist of 1848–49 became the better-known Bakunin made famous retrospectively by the posthumous ideological quarrels of the twentieth century.<sup>50</sup> Having become a member of the IWMA in 1868, Bakunin would subsequently clash with Marx. Through the latter's machinations on the General Council, he would be kicked out of the International in 1872. After having published in Russian his last important text (the only substantial work he managed to complete in book form), *Statism and Anarchy*, in 1873,<sup>51</sup> Bakunin, increasingly sick, abandoned political life altogether after a botched attempt at insurrection in Bologna in August 1874. He died in Berne in 1876.

During Bakunin's last years of revolutionary activity, vestiges of 1848 were nevertheless still present. Indeed, it was most often with former actors of 1848 that Bakunin found himself in conflict during this period. This was initially the case with Giuseppe Mazzini, whom Bakunin sparred with after the latter condemned the Paris Commune.<sup>52</sup> This conflict was partly driven by the fact that many of Mazzini's former followers had embraced Bakunin's ideological leadership in the early 1870s. But Bakunin's struggle with Mazzini also revolved around the competing aspirations for social and national emancipation among Italian radicals. Those clashes, which pitted these aspirations against one another during the close of the *Risorgimento*, obviously resuscitated many of the dilemmas Bakunin had been acutely confronted with in 1848–49 when he attempted to formulate a revolutionary platform for the Slavs of Central Europe. As for Bakunin's sparring with Marx in the IWMA, it would, of course, garner much more attention from both scholars and left-leaning militants a century later. But, likewise, it is important to remember that Bakunin never forgave Marx for the accusations of espionage published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* back in the summer of 1848. Bakunin

<sup>50</sup> The image of Bakunin, the revolutionary anti-Marxist anarchist of the period of the First International (as opposed to, for example, Bakunin the idiosyncratic Hegelian pan-Slavist of 1848–49), has been undeniably reinforced by the fact that the two most accessible collections of Bakunin's writings – the first published by Max Nettlau with James Guillaume's assistance in the early twentieth century, and the second by Arthur Lehning after the Second World War – have focused exclusively on Bakunin's writings from 1867 onwards, ignoring his earlier writings from the 1840s until the time of the IWMA.

<sup>51</sup> Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> This conflict is well-documented in Lehning's two-volume anthology, *Michel Bakounine et l'Italie, 1871–1872*, published in Bakunin, *Œuvres Complètes*, vols. I and II

returned to this libel regularly in his writings from the early 1870s, frequently noting how Marx and his allies were distinctly ‘German’ socialists, whose attachment to the state stemmed in large part from a national defect as old as his 1850 ‘My Defence’: the incapacity of the German people to unify itself spontaneously, without outside, artificial (and Prussian) government intervention from above during the 1848–49 period.<sup>53</sup> This paradoxical admixture, combining the idealisation of ethno-cultural unification with anti-statism, is alone perhaps proof enough that even though posterity since the twentieth century has chosen to remember Bakunin as one of the founding doctrinal figures of ‘anarchism’, he remained all his life very much a creature of the contradictory aims of the European Revolutions of the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>53</sup> For recurrent references to the slanderous rumours purported by the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Bakunin’s manuscript, ‘Rapports personnels avec Marx’, pp. 121–30, esp. pp. 125–28, in Lehning, *Michel Bakounine et l’Italie, deuxième partie, La Première Internationale en Italie et le conflit avec Marx*, vol. 2 of *Œuvres complètes*; as well as Lehning’s anthology, *Michel Bakounine et les Conflits dans l’International: La Question Germano-slave et le Communisme d’État*, published in Bakunin, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. III, pp. 156–57; and *L’Empire knouto-germanique et la Révolution Sociale en France*, in Bakunin, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. VIII, pp. 83–87. Bakunin’s claim that the statist character of German socialism adopted by Marx and his allies stemmed in part from the ethno-cultural incompetence of the German people can be found in passing in the latter two volumes as well as in *Statism and Anarchy*, pp. 144–64.

## 18 Elusive Signifiers

### 1848 and the Language of 'Class Struggle'

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*Gareth Stedman Jones*

Throughout most of the twentieth century, 'class struggle' was widely accepted as one of the primary forces driving forward 'the Age of Revolutions'.<sup>1</sup> The political turbulence of the years between 1776 and 1848 was generally treated as a dramatic expression of the visible social and economic effects of industrialisation. An analogy was drawn between the revolutionary overthrow of the *Ancien Régime* in France – a 'bourgeois revolution' – and the onset of the 'industrial revolution' thought to be taking place at around the same time in Britain. The peculiar intensity of political conflict was interpreted as the result of the advance of a new system of social relations, which pitted the two newly emerged classes of the industrial era, 'bourgeois' or 'middle class' and 'proletariat' or 'working class' against each other. Since the emergence of these classes was generally understood in economic and social terms, it was not difficult to conclude that the conflicts of the period were to be attributed to capitalist development.<sup>2</sup>

Marx and those who followed him were not wrong to view the period between the 1770s and 1848 as a sequence of potentially revolutionary struggles. After all, in the aftermath of the American and French Revolutions, both in France and in England and to a varying degree elsewhere, political organisations demanding universal manhood suffrage, sometimes on a national scale, sought to challenge or bring down the existing political order in the name of the republic or the *true* constitution.

<sup>1</sup> Most famously expressed in the *Communist Manifesto*, whose first section on 'Bourgeois and Proletarians' began with the claim that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle', G. Stedman Jones (ed.), *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: The Communist Manifesto* (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> From the 1980s, however, the notion of a 'dual revolution' was increasingly challenged and it became increasingly clear that there were no self-evident economic facts of the kind presupposed by this stylised social history. The idea of 1789–94 in France as a 'bourgeois revolution' had been challenged as early as 1964 by Alfred Cobban, while narratives of the 'industrial revolution' prevalent up to the 1960s, notably that of Walt Rostow, who dated 'the take-off' of industrialisation in Britain to the 1780s, were increasingly abandoned. See W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

But historians following Marx failed to explain the political form in which these struggles were played out or the means by which they were resolved.

The struggles of the period were not immediately related to capitalist economic development.<sup>3</sup> It was not therefore in any meaningful sense a 'class struggle' between 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie'. In the first place, the antagonisms of the period can no longer be related in any immediate way to the 'industrial revolution'. The period between the 1790s and 1848 was not one of exceptional economic growth except in a few highly localised regions, yet the political conflicts occurred on a national or at least supra-regional scale.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, as politicians and historians beginning with Guizot and Marx came to realise, it proved impossible to ascribe to 'the bourgeoisie' or 'middle class' the capacity to act as a coherent political or ideological force. The group which Marx and others assumed to be a real social and political actor in the years before 1848 turned out to be a rhetorical creation, a force deployed in different ways, by both governments and oppositions. Its invention and celebration as the *classes moyennes* in France in the 1820s, or as the 'middle classes' in England in the aftermath of 1832, had been the offshoot of a determination to transform the constitution and its accompanying institutions into a rational and secular political system, but without allowing a place for popular sovereignty, still greatly feared from the years of Robespierre and the Terror.

It was not, therefore, the activities of a fictive 'bourgeoisie', but the attempt around 1830 to construct a new and secular electoral system, but one which did not include wage earners, which created the 'struggle' of 'working class' and 'middle class'. Those excluded from the vote were defined by their lack of property, and hence their dependence on wages.

<sup>3</sup> In Paris, the number of middle-class or middle-income Parisians as a proportion of the Parisian population as a whole remained the same in 1880 as it had in 1815, see A. Daumard, *Les Bourgeois et la Bourgeoisie en France depuis 1815* (Paris: Aubier, 1987), pp. 85–93.

<sup>4</sup> See N. F. R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); N. F. R. Crafts & C. K. Harley, 'Output growth and the British Industrial Revolution: A restatement of the Crafts-Harley view', *Economic History Review* 45 (1992), 703–30. The research of economic historians revealed that the most striking changes occurred not in industry, but in agriculture and commerce; and much earlier than previously thought. According to Gregory King's calculations, already in 1688, only 55 per cent of the population was engaged in the production of food and raw materials. It was the development of agriculture and commerce, which most sharply distinguished 'the British case' from patterns of development elsewhere. In the 1850s, while the difference in industrial productivity between Britain and France was estimated to be 10 per cent, that between British and French agriculture was estimated at over 60 per cent. See E. A. Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 37–38; Crafts, *British Economic Growth*.



Conversely, from 1848 onwards, with the introduction of manhood suffrage in France and renewed talk of reform in England, workers were progressively incorporated into the reformed political system, and the legitimacy of their interests within the polity was given some recognition. For this reason, the political and extra-constitutional significance of what the *Communist Manifesto* had defined as the 'class struggle' faded away.

The language of 'class struggle' originated in France in the years after 1815. It was an idea devised by the *Doctrinaires*, an intellectual grouping of liberals formed following the Restoration of the Bourbon king, Louis XVIII. This language was not the product of capitalist economic development, nor was it the result of a novel sociological insight. It was a direct response to political events. The restoration of the Bourbon king in 1815 had been accompanied by a 'Charter' which preserved the liberal gains of the revolutionary period, in particular civil equality and a representative form of government. But this compromise had been endangered by Napoleon's Hundred Days, which left Bonapartists and republicans discredited, and produced a National Assembly dominated by legitimists, the so-called *chambre introuvable*.<sup>5</sup> Following the assassination of the heir to the throne, the Duc de Berry, in February 1820, the *Doctrinaires* were also put under pressure. The press was censored and a new electoral law crippled the liberal opposition, who by 1823, had been reduced to nineteen seats. The *Doctrinaires* claimed that the measure had been designed to disenfranchise the *classes moyennes*.

The claims of the Ultras (legitimist royalists) had been buttressed by the publication of *De la Monarchie Française* by the Comte de Montlosier in 1814.<sup>6</sup> According to Montlosier, legitimacy was the sole basis for order. After the social dissolution which had occurred during the revolution, the French were a new people who possessed nothing by

<sup>5</sup> The term *chambre introuvable* (literally an 'unobtainable chamber') was coined by the restored Bourbon king, Louis XVIII. He meant an assembly, more royalist than the king could have imagined. Of 400 deputies elected in August 1815, 350 were ultra-royalist. Its extremism obstructed the king's desire for national reconciliation. The king dissolved the Assembly on 5 September 1816.

<sup>6</sup> On the impact of Montlosier, see S. M. Gruner, 'Political historiography in restoration France', *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), 346–65. Montlosier's Treatise could be understood as a further contribution to a debate which had begun in the 1790s: how to bring the revolution to an end. Ending the revolution meant establishing a new principle of order capable of commanding consent, whether in the form of a new 'spiritual power' ('un pouvoir spirituel') capable of replacing the Catholic Church, or of a new form of secular authority to replace that of the feudal nobility. Montlosier had originally written his study as a celebration of Napoleon, connecting him with the martial tradition of the Franks. But after Napoleon's fall, he repackaged his work as a defence of the Bourbon restoration; see G. Stedman Jones, 'Saint-Simon and the liberal origins of the socialist critique of Political Economy' in S. Aprile & F. Bensimon (eds.), *La France et L'Angleterre au XIXe Siècle: Échanges, Représentations, Comparaisons* (Paris: Créaphis, 2006), pp. 32–3.

right, and for whom everything was an act of grace. Only the monarchy provided a principle of legitimacy derived from ancient times together with the old aristocracy, the descendants of the warrior Franks. In addition, legitimist pamphleteers did their best to discredit liberals by identifying the revolution with the excesses of the Terror.

In response to this legitimist offensive, the *Doctrinaires* invented an alternative vision of French history. The main argument was articulated in different ways by Guizot, Thierry, Mignet, Thiers, Remusat, and Victor Cousin. In place of Montlosier's identification of France with the warrior Franks, the *Doctrinaires* portrayed French history as the development of an ethnically based 'class struggle'. The true people of France were not the 'Germanic invaders', but the conquered Gauls, who in the face of alien feudal oppression had allied themselves with the monarch, protected themselves with royal charters, and formed 'communes'. This was the so-called 'third estate' which, after centuries of resistance, became the French nation in 1789. These were the *classes moyennes*, the people who worked. The argument was put most dramatically by François Guizot in 1820:

The Revolution has been a war, a real war such as that familiar to the world as a war between foreign peoples. For more than thirteen centuries, France contained two peoples, a conquering people and a conquered people. For more than thirteen centuries the conquered people struggled to free themselves from the yoke imposed by the conquering people. Our history is the history of that struggle. In our own day, a decisive battle has been fought. It is called the Revolution.<sup>7</sup>

In England, until the notorious Peterloo massacre of 1819, the middle classes were simply part of 'the people'. Historians have built up an impressively detailed social picture of the middle 'ranks' in 1650–1850 period, detailing their income levels, religious outlook, conceptions of family, education, business habits, networks of sociability, and political activities. They have also argued that from the late seventeenth century, surplus wealth among the gentry and 'the middling sort' produced an urban revival, expressed in public building, assembly rooms, shops, and local newspapers. These were expressions, it was argued, of the emergence of a commercial society in which, in the towns at least, traditional forms of clientage were giving way to a new form of emulative consumerism.<sup>8</sup> But despite all the evidence for their growing wealth and

<sup>7</sup> F. Guizot, *Du Gouvernement de la France depuis la Restauration. Des Conspirations et de la Justice Politique* (Paris, 1820), pp. 1–3 (my own translation); see P. Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p. 182.

<sup>8</sup> See P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660–1730* (London: Methuen, 1989); P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989);

social importance, there was nothing to suggest that these developments produced an increasing propensity towards collective political action, or the consciousness of a shared 'middle class' political interest.

The Scottish theorists of commercial society – Hume, Smith, and Millar – had already in the eighteenth century referred with varying degrees of approval to the position of the 'middling ranks'. It was assumed that these would increasingly share in the growth of wealth and education characteristic of commercial society. Occasionally, there was also speculation about the moral and political values which might be associated with 'the middle ranks'.<sup>9</sup> But the definition of these middling ranks remained vague and inconsistent. At different points, it encompassed members of the professions, merchants, and manufacturers; gentry, artisans, and skilled labourers.<sup>10</sup>

As in France, the eventual emergence of a language invoking 'the middle and working classes' was not the product of social and economic development, but of political events after 1815. The political and cultural divisions between liberalism and conservatism or loyalism ran through putative classes, rather than between them. The universalist language of natural rights employed by radicals made no distinction between different strata within the people. Radicals distinguished between rich and poor. As the Whig defender of the French Revolution, Sir James Mackintosh, argued, 'there never was, or will be, in civilised society, but two grand interests in society, that of the Rich and that of the Poor'. But the predominant distinction between the beneficiaries and the victims of government was political. For, as Thomas Paine, put it, 'there are two

P. J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns, 1700–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People. England 1727–1783* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830–1900* (London: Fontana, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> The extent to which they placed confidence in the middle orders varied greatly. Hume was the most unequivocal in thinking that an expansion in the size and importance of the 'middling rank' would be 'the best and firmest basis of public liberty'. John Millar in his *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771) argued that while commerce and the growth of the 'the middling ranks' had a 'tendency to introduce democratical government' in small states, in large states it might equally lead to despotism. Smith, while unambiguous about the tendency of commerce to undermine ties of feudal dependence, avoided any political judgement about the present or future relationship between government and the 'middling ranks'. See D. Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 99–102; D. Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 176–77.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Winch notes that Hume's usage of the term 'middling rank' covered 'the large group which exists somewhere between the feudal nobility and a dependent peasantry; it certainly seems to include the gentry as well as the merchant classes, and cannot be equated with what later became known as the middle classes'. Winch, *Adam Smith*, p. 99.

distinct classes of men in the nation, those who pay taxes, and those who receive and live upon the taxes'.<sup>11</sup>

The radicalism, which developed from the time of John Wilkes and the American Revolution, had been built upon appeals to the balance and true nature of the constitution. 'The ancient rights and liberties' of 'the people' had formed the basis of the 'laws and customs' of parliament, and these had been specifically confirmed in the Bill of Rights associated with the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1689. But the meaning attached to 'the people' or 'commons' had been contested ever since the Putney Debates of 1646 and had remained ambiguous during the debates of 1688–89. Through most of the eighteenth century, it had largely been assumed that 'the people' signified 'the electors' (propertied free-holders) within each county and borough. In the 1790s in response to the Revolution in France, there had briefly appeared a democratic radicalism aimed at addressing 'members unlimited' and associated with Paine and the London Corresponding Society.<sup>12</sup> This attempt to enlarge the political nation was bitterly contested by Conservatives. Marginalised by the outbreak of war against France and harassed by the aggressive hostility of loyalists, the London Corresponding Society had been disbanded in 1794.

In the harsh years following Waterloo, radicalism re-emerged.<sup>13</sup> The government was faced with exceptional population growth, bad harvests, and falling wages, both in agriculture and industry. Furthermore, the mass unemployment which accompanied the dismantling of the war economy was exacerbated by the return of 300,000 demobilised soldiers and sailors. The government's response was both reactionary and inept. With the return of peace, income tax – the one means by which the propertied had contributed to the costs of government – was abolished. But there was no retrenchment. Sinécures and unwarranted pensions were maintained. Furthermore, to maintain the previous level of expenditure, an extra 3 million pounds was raised in indirect taxation. Such taxes on consumption not only weighed most heavily on the poor, but also adversely targeted important industries, like ship-building, wool manufacture, and shoe-making. Workers in these industries were especially prominent in the radical agitation of the period.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in D. Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain c.1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 71, 74.

<sup>12</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), ch. 1.

<sup>13</sup> See J. Fulcher, 'Contests over constitutionalism: The faltering of reform in England, 1816–1824', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge (1993).

The response, both to economic distress and to the government's conduct, took the shape of a mass movement for parliamentary reform, and was more sharply focused than the radicalism of the 1790s. This post-war Reform movement was able to extend the language of constitutionalism to encompass the unrepresented. In the writings of Cobbett and the speeches of Hunt, this was justified by exploiting the ambiguities of the 1689 settlement. This was also the first movement to attract large numbers of workers.<sup>14</sup> But its language was not that of class or exploitation. Post-1816 radicalism linked all economic discontent to political corruption, which could only be reversed by a rebalancing of the constitution. Labour was a form of property whose interests would be recognised in a rebalanced constitution based upon universal (male) suffrage. Equally important, however, was the ability of this movement, unlike that of the 1790s, to combine radicalism with a language of patriotism. Beginning in 1812 with the formation of Hampden Clubs, this movement, led by John Cartwright, a former naval and militia officer, stressed the claims of the large numbers of those who had fought in the war who bore the brunt of taxation.<sup>15</sup>

The language of universal rights, associated with Paine and the London Corresponding Society, were not, as some have argued, a new and radical departure from a 'constitutionalist idiom' in which radicals had formerly framed their demands.<sup>16</sup> In fact, this language of natural rights was the product of the seventeenth century and Locke's thought in particular. It presupposed that political legitimacy derived from the consent of the governed. Radical constitutionalism was built upon this premise and remained the predominant language of radicals and Chartists through to 1848. The argument was clearly put by the *Northern Star* in 1839:

Every member of a political state is entitled to certain privileges, which are either the residue of natural rights, whose surrender was not required for the public good, or those civil liberties, which society provides and guarantees in lieu of the natural rights so given up.<sup>17</sup>

The increasing extent and intensity of post-war political discontent among 'the people' alarmed the government and conservatives. Faced

<sup>14</sup> Fulcher, *Contests over Constitutionalism*, pp. 64–74.

<sup>15</sup> The original Hampden Club was formed in London in 1812, but spread particularly over the midlands and the northern counties. Members paid 1d subscription per week. Clubs met weekly for political discussion and radical pamphlets and newspaper articles were read. The Clubs were suppressed in 1817.

<sup>16</sup> This was the argument of Edward Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class*, especially in part I.

<sup>17</sup> *Northern Star*, 14 September 1839, cited in J. Gibson, 'Natural right and the intellectual context of early Chartist thought', *History Workshop Journal*, 84 (2017), 194–213.

by the Spa Fields Riots of December 1816, followed by the March of the Blanketeers in March 1817 and the so-called Pentrich Rising of March and June 1817, the government concluded it was witnessing preparations for a coming revolution. Similar fears also provoked the formation of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, an inexperienced volunteer cavalry regiment, whose panicked response to the 60–80,000 strong reform demonstration held in St Peter's Square, Manchester, on 16 August 1819 culminated in a mounted sabre charge, in which fifteen were killed and 400 to 700 were injured.

The shocked reaction to Peterloo, followed by the government's repressive Six Acts of 1819, transformed the political landscape.<sup>18</sup> The Whigs saw the Six Acts as a tyrannical interference with the constitution, drew closer to the Radicals and espoused the cause of Reform. But arguments for Reform beyond radical circles raised awkward questions about popular sovereignty, which is why it was at this moment that the putative political role of the middle classes was first invoked.

For Whigs and moderate reformers, as for the liberals in France, the revolution, particularly the nightmarish memory of the Jacobins and the Terror, ensured that any proposal for a change in political representation should stop short of popular sovereignty. So long as the Napoleonic wars continued, there was a general consensus that it would be pointless and unpatriotic to propose constitutional change. *The Edinburgh Review* rejected such proposals in 1806; Lord John Russell and Lord Holland agreed to shelve the issue, and Bentham, who composed his *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* in 1808, delayed publication for another nine years.<sup>19</sup> It was only after Waterloo and the end of the French threat that it was considered appropriate to raise the question of Reform again.

Intellectually, however, there was a difficulty. If the case were to be made on the basis of principle, it would be difficult to construct a position short of universal suffrage. The problem was posed precisely in this form, with the publication of Bentham's *Plan*. Not only did Bentham see no

<sup>18</sup> The Six Acts forbade drilling, enabled the searching of private property for weapons, curtailed the right to hold public meetings, made dependent on the permission of a magistrate, and restricted to members of a parish. It also imposed more punitive sentences for seditious publication and imposed a steep 4d stamp duty on all publications. The measures were opposed by the Whigs, and for the most part repealed in the 1820s.

<sup>19</sup> See W. Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice, 1817–1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 19; for Whig positions during the Napoleonic Wars, see B. Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: The Edinburgh Review, 1802–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); A. Plassart, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

option short of manhood suffrage, logic drove him to include women, bankrupts, and lunatics as well.

It was in the aftermath of Bentham's proposal, seen by many at the time as the *reductio ad absurdum* of Reform politics, that the middle 'orders', 'ranks', or 'classes' were discursively conjured into existence. A reply by Sir James Mackintosh to Bentham stating the *Edinburgh Review* position in 1818 perceived the difficulty of stopping short of 'democratic ascendancy', if Bentham's mode of reasoning were adopted. But he nevertheless insisted that Bentham's proposal of universal suffrage was quite unacceptable since it would lead to a 'permanent animosity between opinion and property'.<sup>20</sup>

If the suffrage were to be extended, yet still be restricted, on what basis might this be done? A uniform franchise on the basis of a property qualification, leading to a one-class representative system, would only alienate the lower classes further from the political system. Yet if this were the only option, it was thought that the authorities 'must indeed vest it in the middling classes; both because they possess the largest share of sense and virtue and because they have the most numerous connections of interest with the other parts of society'.<sup>21</sup> It was precisely because of their unease about a comprehensive franchise reform, which would not only exclude the lower classes, but also remove the democratic features of the existing constitution – scot and lot boroughs, for instance – that the Whigs in the 1820s espoused a case for piecemeal Reform, based upon the disqualification of corrupt boroughs and the gradual transfer of seats.<sup>22</sup>

For more systematic reformers, whose main concern was to replace aristocratic government, the case to be made was more awkward. A good example was James Mill's 1820 *Essay On Government* in which he proposed universal suffrage. Only in a system in which all were represented could there be government in the interests of all. But it seems that while writing the *Essay*, Mill was dissuaded by Ricardo, under the influence of his friend, Hutches Trower, from explicitly advancing a case for universal suffrage.<sup>23</sup> The interim solution was to imagine a class whose interests were identical with that of the whole, and who would then ensure that the main features of Mill's conception of representative government remained intact, hence the famous encomium

<sup>20</sup> See *Edinburgh Review*, 31 (December 1818), 165–205; cited in S. Collini, D. Winch and J. Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 98–99.

<sup>21</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 31/61 (December 1818), 191.

<sup>22</sup> See A. Mitchell, *The Whigs in Opposition, 1815–1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

<sup>23</sup> Thomas, *Philosophic Radicals*, pp. 124–27; see T. Ball (ed.), *James Mill, Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. xix–xxi.



for wisdom and disinterestedness of the middle ranks. Mill has traditionally been regarded as one of the architects of middle-class radicalism. But in his 1820 *Essay on Government*, he said nothing of the economic role of the middle class, and in any case, wrote not of the 'middle class' but of 'the middle rank', 'the most wise and most virtuous part of the community', which 'gives to science, to art, and to legislation itself, their most distinguished ornaments'.<sup>24</sup>

Mill's emphasis was not upon class or rank, but upon the *middle*, whose normative connotations went back to Aristotle.<sup>25</sup> It was in this normative sense that the term 'middle class' had sometimes been employed.<sup>26</sup> But its more usual usage was classificatory. In the 1824 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the entry on 'class' referred to 'classes of quadrupeds, birds, fishes and so forth', and cross-referenced its entry to articles on 'animal kingdom' and 'botany'.<sup>27</sup>

Ricardo's employment of 'class' as a term of art was nothing new. It went back to the writings of the physiocrats in the 1750s. Nor was the 1824 reference of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to botany without relevance, for the employment of 'class' as a neutral taxonomic term by the physiocrats was directly borrowed from Buffon's method of botanical classification.<sup>28</sup> What is clear is that no immediate connection was made between the economic, political, and cultural roles of the middle class or those of middle rank.

<sup>24</sup> 'Government' in James Mill, *Political Writings*, p. 41.

<sup>25</sup> For Aristotle's praise of 'the middle', see M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> In 1799, for example, George Canning bemoaned the absence in Ireland of, 'those classes of men who connect the upper and lower orders of society, and who thereby blend together and harmonise the whole ... that middle class of men, of whom skill and enterprise, and sober, orderly habits, are the particular characteristics'; cited in N. McCord, 'Some difficulties of parliamentary reform', *Historical Journal*, 10/3 (1967), 377.

<sup>27</sup> Marx in his well-known letter about class struggle in 1852, referred both to its use by historians and to 'the economic anatomy of the classes described by bourgeois economists'. He referred to the opening lines of Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy*, where it was stated that 'the produce of the earth' was 'divided among three classes of the community'. But in the 1810s and 1820s, it is striking that there seems to have been no perceived connection between this technical use of the classificatory term, *class*, in political economy or botany and the vocabulary of political or historical debate. 'Marx to Weydemeyer', 5 March 1852, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975–2004) [subsequently MECW], vol. 39, p. 62; P. Sraffa (ed.), *Works and Correspondence of Ricardo*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), vol. I, Preface.

<sup>28</sup> See M.-F. Piguet, '"Classe" et "ordre" au 18ème siècle: l'émergence du mot "classe" dans le vocabulaire français de la division sociale', unpublished paper, delivered to the colloquium on *Bürgerturn*, Göttingen 1991.

In the 1820s, the Reform movement went into abeyance.<sup>29</sup> Conservatives distanced themselves from an overt identification with repression and 'corruption', adopting instead a liberal Tory agenda.<sup>30</sup> They retreated from the Six Acts, reduced expenditure, lowered taxation, returned to the gold standard, and repealed the Combination Laws. Whigs confined their efforts to the piecemeal disfranchisement of rotten boroughs. Radicals lost credibility after identifying themselves with the flawed campaign to support Queen Caroline. When the opportunity for a reform campaign reappeared in 1830–31, its inception was brought about, not by mounting middle-class pressure, but by the fall of Wellington's ministry in the aftermath of a Tory rebellion over Catholic emancipation in Ireland. The incoming Whig ministry declared its reasons for introducing a bill to be practical – the need to reduce corruption and taxation and to enfranchise unrepresented communities. At that point, the political unions in Birmingham and elsewhere still expected reform 'to be achieved by a general political union of the lower and middle classes of the people'. But on the second night of the parliamentary debate, the whole meaning of the Bill was transformed, once Macaulay from the backbenches spoke of Reform as 'the struggle which the middle classes in England are maintaining against an aristocracy of mere locality'. If the purpose of the Bill were simply to enfranchise the middle classes, then Reform as a movement designed to unite the people was at an end. For as the radical 'Orator Hunt' declared, 'their policy ... was to get one million of the middle classes, the little shopkeepers and those people, to join the higher classes'. 'Mere mechanics', on the other hand – the sinews of the nation – would be consigned to 'political slavery'.<sup>31</sup>

In France, the period of comparative calm from 1822 under the premiership of Villèle was brought to an end by the liberal victory of 1827. It was assisted by the clandestine organisation, 'Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera', led by Guizot. The increasingly desperate attempts of Charles X to resist the liberal majority in the Chamber of Deputies culminating in the suspension of freedom of the press and the dissolution of the Chamber

<sup>29</sup> While in the year March 1831, there were over 1,000 petitions for Reform, in the years between 1825 and 1829 there had been none. B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England 1783–1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), pp. 412, 420.

<sup>30</sup> See B. Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of Tory Government, 1815–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> M. Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1973), p. 187; Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, p. 433; until the Reform debates of 1832, the principal purpose of Reform had been the representation of communities and the distribution of seats rather than the level of enfranchisement. For this reason, radicals like Burdett or Hunt, while pushing for manhood suffrage, could support the Whig reform measures.

provoked the three-day Revolution of July 1830 – ‘les trois glorieuses’ – in which the king was forced to flee and through a deft liberal manoeuvre, was replaced by the ‘citizen king’, Louis-Philippe.

But beyond a wholesale replacement of government officials, there was little significant change.<sup>32</sup> As a result of the electoral reform of 1831 the electorate was enlarged from 100,000 to 167,000 (later to 250,000) out of 33 million. Fifty-five per cent of this electorate continued to draw most of their income from land.<sup>33</sup> In Guizot’s view, voting was not a right, but a function exercised by the most able of the citizenry, the *capacitaires*. The task of the *capacitaires* was not to follow their particular desires, but to obey reason, and therefore not so much to make law as to discover it. The representative system with the help of the press and the academy would concentrate reason and produce a collective interest. The *capacitaires* would act as the political force, produced by and embedded in civil society. They would fulfil a function analogous to the exercise of ‘pouvoir spirituel’ imagined by theocrats and positivists. But this meant that although Guizot’s government claimed to represent the bourgeois, the vast majority of the *classes moyennes* remained unenfranchised.

It used to be thought that the 1830 Revolution represented the ascent to power of the *grande bourgeoisie* – Marx’s ‘stock-exchange kings’ – an assumption reinforced by the presence in the new Council of ministers of two bankers, Jacques Laffitte and Casimir Périer.<sup>34</sup> But real changes were small. Not only was there no industrial take-off, but there was no new legislative programme, no significant change in economic policy and no significant alteration in the composition of the Chamber of Deputies. Even more seriously, there was no evidence of the existence of the social group, to whom the *Doctrinaires* notionally appealed. In this sense, Sarah Maza is correct to argue that ‘the French bourgeoisie did not exist’.<sup>35</sup>

In the absence of such a group, the identity of the July Ministry was defined by its enemies, both on the right and the left. The idea of the July Monarchy as the rule of the ‘bourgeoisie’ began as an accusation levelled

<sup>32</sup> Guizot swept out all but seven prefects, more than 400 magistrates were replaced and commanding generals in nineteen military districts lost their commands. See D. H. Pinkney, *The French Revolution of 1830* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 276–77.

<sup>33</sup> F. Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1770–1880* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 333–34; P. McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1789–1914* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 118–20.

<sup>34</sup> See for example, J. l’Homme, *La Grande Bourgeoisie au Pouvoir, 1830–1880* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960).

<sup>35</sup> S. Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay in the Social Imaginary, 1750–1850* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 5–7.

at it by the Ultras.<sup>36</sup> But it was very soon replicated by the left. In the aftermath of the July Revolution, economic depression combined with political frustration brought together republicans and artisans in militant societies such as the *Amis du Peuple* and the *Société des Droits de l'Homme*. The left had expected the revolution to bring about manhood suffrage and a republic, while distressed artisans had expected some form of assistance. It was largely artisans, who mounted the barricades and brought down Charles X. Yet despite the fact that over 1,500 of them had been killed or injured in the fighting, they were not admitted to the *pays légal*. As a result, Guizot's 'bourgeoisie' underwent a hostile redefinition.

In the aftermath of 1830, the watchword among republicans and socialists became 'association'. Associations of artisans, whether as charities or covert trade societies, had re-emerged in the 1820s. Now republicans and socialists imbued them with a larger political meaning, linking them with the memory of the revolution as a 'nation' built upon a revolutionary brotherhood. Furthermore, preachers of a romantically defined Christianity, especially Lamennais, implied that only the republic could fulfil the promise of the nation as an undivided community. Conflict between these associations and the government culminated in street battles in Paris and industrial struggle in Lyon led to the government's banning of workers' associations in 1834. Around the same time, Saint-Simonians, such as Enfantin and Transon, redefined the idea of the bourgeois into a purely economic sense.<sup>37</sup> The bourgeoisie was now described as a new form of aristocracy. They were idlers, who lived off the labours of the productive class: an idea adopted by the republican left. According to Louis Blanc:

Just as in politics and religion, the bourgeoisie had almost completely sacrificed authority to liberty, community of faith to absolute intellectual independence, fraternity to pride; so in matters of trade and manufactures it sacrificed the principle of association to that of competition: a dangerous principle which transforms emulation into implacable war, consecrates all the abuses of might, torments the rich man with insatiable desires, and leaves the poor man to perish lonely and neglected. Accordingly, in conjunction with the principle of competition, there grew up rapidly among the bourgeoisie immoderate thirst for wealth,

<sup>36</sup> Cartoons dwelt upon the king's allegedly 'bourgeois' traits, notably his carrying of an umbrella. Ultras were particularly angered by the abolition of the exclusive right of nobles to membership of the Chamber of Peers and the opening up of the Chamber to non-nobles appointed by the king.

<sup>37</sup> See S. M. Gruner, *Economic Materialism and Social Moralism: A Study in the History of Ideas in France from the Latter Part of the 18th Century to the Middle of the 19th Century* (Hague: Mouton, 1973), pp. 143–49.

the fever of speculation – in a word, materialism with all its cruel and gross deformity.<sup>38</sup>

Conversely, the third estate, those who worked – Sieyès's definition of the nation – had now become 'the working classes'.

As in England, the fact of political exclusion became the dominant theme in the definition of the working classes, or 'proletariat', as they were increasingly described. Reflecting on his research in Paris between 1841 and 1843 on the emergence of communism and socialism, Lorenz von Stein wrote:

The class of the propertyless has become a single whole; it has acquired a consciousness about its condition. It recognises that this condition is the product of laws, which extend beyond individuals; it feels itself to be ruled by a power, with which it has struggled in vain; it has been excluded from real participation in the government of the state; it sees clearly how impossible it is for the great majority of its members to climb up from it into a higher class; it has therefore become an estate, and this estate which at the same time embodies all the demands, raised by the principle of equality, without satisfying them, is the French proletariat. The emergence of this proletariat is the result of the two decades, which followed the July Revolution.<sup>39</sup>

But the appeal of the republican left was limited by the memory of the excesses of Jacobinism. More appealing to all sections of the population were the imperial ideals and nostalgia surrounding the Napoleonic state. This was highlighted both by the enthusiasm surrounding the re-burial of Napoleon in the Invalides in 1840, and by the massive vote for Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in the presidential election of December 1848.<sup>40</sup> In this sense, the principal contrast of the period was not that between the 'bourgeois' and the 'proletarian', but Hegel's contrast between the burgher and the citizen, between the bourgeois as private individual and the civil servant or state official as member of the universal class. Napoleon's creation of a state based upon rational authority embodied in a nation based upon equality and fraternity had created a novel ideal of public service. The revolution had taken many of the functions of government out of the hands of private entrepreneurs and created a class of public officials, which by 1798 had increased from 50,000 to 250,000. Under Napoleon, prestige was associated not with the acquisition of wealth, but either with military glory or with administrative achievement. One of the results of the revolution in 1830 was that many former

<sup>38</sup> L. Blanc, *The History of Ten Years 1830–1840* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845), p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> L. von Stein, *Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreich*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1848), vol. I, p. 165.

<sup>40</sup> The best work on the myth of Napoleon in France in the first half of the nineteenth century is S. Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon* (London: Granta Books, 2005).

Bonapartist officials regained posts, while Guizot himself attempted to replicate some aspects of the Napoleonic ideal in his attempt to base the ideal of the *capacitaires* on reason and the capacity to see beyond immediate material interests.

From the mid-1830s, however, Guizot became increasingly aware that his project of turning the *classe moyenne* into a political class and embedding it in society was failing. In the 1820s he already thought it urgent to combat the timorousness, the political indifference, and the lack of public concern among the *classe moyenne*. By the late 1830s, he had lost optimism about the new state. The notion of a new state philosophy represented by Cousin's eclecticism or Guizot's own hope of an alliance between religion and philosophy engendering a new reformation foundered upon the opposition of the Catholic Church and the indifference of the populace. The concern for peace in foreign policy similarly found itself opposed by the unassuaged nationalism of a nation still nursing the memory of Waterloo. By the 1840s, the high hopes of 'bourgeois' rule had relapsed into a passive conservatism and the association of the bourgeois with the commonplace, the philistine, pettiness of imagination, and the cliché was becoming a firmly established literary genre. As Guizot himself bitterly remarked of the *juste milieu* after his fall in 1849:

It was too narrowly based, too small in stature, too cold or candid in its emphasis upon order in freedom; it was full of petty jealousies, feeble-hearted; in its desires and fears, remote from great desires or great hopes, even pushing them away from itself as things which threatened or troubled its peace of mind.<sup>41</sup>

The supposed vulgarity of the bourgeoisie and its inability to comprehend higher values were mercilessly underlined in Balzac's 1846 novel, *Cousin Bette*. One of its central features was its portrayal of Monsieur Crevel, the rich, vain, and self-satisfied perfumier as a bourgeois anti-hero, proud of his National Guard and mayoral uniforms: 'Nearly all men assume a posture which they think will show off the advantages with which nature has endowed them.' With Crevel, this attitude consisted of 'crossing his arms like Napoleon, turning his head three-quarters round and looking towards the horizon, as the painter made Napoleon do in his portrait'.<sup>42</sup>

In England in the 1830s and 1840s, among radicals and later Chartists, Macaulay's historic view of the middle classes was not shared. The middle classes were presented as unheroic and passive. The most salient image

<sup>41</sup> François Guizot to Charles Lenormant, 11 January 1849, cited in Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot*, pp. 311–12.

<sup>42</sup> H. de Balzac, *Cousin Bette*, trans. Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 38.

was that of the shopkeeper or, if the reference was hostile, of a group which 'bought cheap and sold dear'. Employers were less frequently invoked and professional groups barely at all. The controllers of the corrupt system of political representation and social oppression were 'money-lords', 'steam-lords', 'moneycrats', 'capitalists'. But it is questionable how far such groups were conceived to belong to the middle classes. Such parasites, by definition, did not belong to the ranks of the industrious, and the language clearly implied that they were to be aligned with a new form of aristocracy and the system of political and social domination rather than to the world of work and industry.

In radical and Chartist writings, the 'middle classes' now joined the nation's rulers insofar as they were included within an exclusive property-based system of political representation. But it was not generally imagined that they formed an integral part of that ruling class. They were rather considered a weak, vacillating, cowardly group, buffeted this way and that between the enticements of the monopolists and the demands of the working classes.

Even among its supporters, an epic role for the middle classes proved brief. Cobden's politics in the 1830s, like those of Guizot in the 1820s, embodied a similar ambition to weld the middle classes into a cohesive political force capable of displacing aristocratic government. In his first pamphlet, *England, Ireland and America* of 1835, Cobden made a similar attempt to equate a politics with a class:

The middle and industrious classes of England can have no interest apart from the preservation of peace. The honours, the fame, the emoluments of war belong not to them; the battle plain is the harvest field of the aristocracy, watered with the blood of the people.<sup>43</sup>

The campaign against the Corn Laws was conceived as a means to an end. As Cobden stated in 1836, 'the Corn Laws are only part of a system in which the Whig and Tory aristocracy have about an equal interest. The colonies, the army, navy and church are with the Corn Laws, merely accessories to our aristocratic government'.<sup>44</sup> Even his opposition to Chartism was primarily based upon the suspicion that the ignorant supporters of the Charter were really dupes of the aristocracy, an agitation set up to divert strength away from the demands of the middle class:

<sup>43</sup> R. Cobden, 'A Manchester manufacturer, England, Ireland and America' (London, 1835) in *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols. (London: Ridgway, 1867), vol. I, pp. 42–43.

<sup>44</sup> BL Add. Mss 43665, 29 April 1837, cited in W. Hinde, *Richard Cobden: A Victorian Outsider* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 61.



The chartists don't seem to understand their real position. They direct all their attacks against capital, machinery, manufactures and trade, which are only the materials of democracy, but they never assail the feudal aristocracy and the State Church which are the materials of the oligarchic despotism under which they are suffering. Feargus and demoniacal followers seem bent on destroying manufacturers in order to restore the age of gothic feudalism.<sup>45</sup>

Cobden and the Anti-Corn Law League appeared to have achieved an amazing triumph with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and Peel's acknowledgement of Cobden's role in helping the government to move towards this decision. But 1846 turned out to be the end rather than the beginning of a significant role played by a party, subsequently claimed by historians to have been specifically of the middle class. Subsequent attempts to arouse the middle class in favour of tax reform in 1848 made little impact, and in the 1850s, Cobden's position was attacked and effectively marginalised both by the Chartist remnant led by Ernest Jones on the left and by Disraeli on the right, as the narrow and self-interested politics of the so-called 'Manchester School'.

Even in the 1830s and 1840s, Cobden, like Guizot, had complained privately of the narrowness and lack of vision of the class in whose name he spoke.<sup>46</sup> Although his organisation claimed substantial middle-class support, the bulk of the League's active supporters were dissenters, socially drawn from the lower-middle class rather than merchants and factory owners. The *Manchester Guardian*, the mouthpiece of the Manchester business community, always dissociated itself from the political ambitions of the League and when Cobden and Bright attempted to defend the cause of peace during the Crimean War, they lost their parliamentary seats.

Searching for an image that would signify the place of money and the individual pursuit of wealth in modern society around the end of 1843, Marx picked on 'the Jew'. 'What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly God? Money'.<sup>47</sup> Leaving aside the

<sup>45</sup> Cobden to Sturge, 25 July 1842, BL Add Mss 50131, cited in Hinde, *Cobden*, p. 114.

<sup>46</sup> When in 1840, Manchester Reformers chose as their candidate a Suffolk squire, T. Milner Gibson, instead of one of their own, Cobden was disgusted. 'What wonder that we are scorned by the landed aristocracy, when we take such pains to show our contempt for ourselves?' Cobden, 5 October 1840, cited in Hinde, *Cobden*, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 170; around the mid-1840s, denunciation of 'the Jew' among socialists was frequent, especially in the case of Fourier and his followers. But the definition of the 'Jew' was very loose, and virtually without religious or ethnic connotations. The Fourierist, Alphonse Toussenel, wrote a well-known tract in 1845, *Les Juifs Rois de l'Epoque*, in which the English, Dutch, and Genevans were equally denounced, for 'qui dit juif, dit protestant, sachez-le'. See Alexandrian, *Le Socialisme Romantique* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), pp. 227–28.

anti-Semitic connotations of this formulation, this was Marx's first attempt to characterise commercial society.

A few weeks later, when he arrived in Paris, he adopted the terminology of Louis Blanc, who in turn had elaborated and dramatised the picture presented by Sismondi, in which the 'bourgeois' Revolution of 1789 had ushered in a competitive free market society. According to Blanc, this was a system of 'extermination' leading both to the impoverishing of workers and the ruin of large sections of the bourgeoisie.<sup>48</sup> Yet, as in the case of the Jew, the looseness of definition is striking. In Saint-Simonian and republican parlance, the bourgeoisie were not defined as an active class pushing forward the forces of production, but idlers living off the earnings of the productive classes; they were nearer to Balzac's Monsieur Crevel than to Jean-Baptiste Say's depiction of the 'entrepreneur'. In this sense, in France at least, the *Communist Manifesto's* depiction of the bourgeoisie's extraordinary transformation of the world would have appeared deeply implausible.

Among Marx's Rheinland friends, it was also hard to find evidence of the existence of such a class. Recounting his impression of the bourgeoisie after a visit to Cologne in 1847, Heinrich Bürgers wrote of their 'colossal distance from *our* consciousness':

Nowhere is there even the beginning of the understanding of the questions that lead us to turn them into topics of public debate. The German bourgeoisie has so far not at all learnt to be a bourgeoisie in our sense; it is still richly infected by that philanthropism which does not yet envisage the conflict against a class subordinated beneath it. Out of the whole manufacturing and trading public of Cologne, for example, there are perhaps not ten people, whom one could call intelligent and determined bourgeois.<sup>49</sup>

Marx's difficulties arose from an attempt to conflate three distinct discourses, whose premises were unrelated to each other. The first was a particular reading of Hegel concerning the place of human labour and activity in driving forward history in general, and the history of capitalism in particular. The second was the French *doctrinaire's* discussion of the character of the bourgeoisie and its supposed struggle against a legitimist aristocracy. The third was a conception of the proletariat assembled from literature on the condition of the working classes, but, crucially, set within a framework inherited from Young Hegelian religious criticism.

<sup>48</sup> L. Blanc, *Organisation du Travail*, fifth edition (Paris: Au bureau de la Société de l'Industrie Fraternelle 1848), pp. 84–97; J.-C.-L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Nouveaux Principes d'Économie Politique, ou De la Richesse dans ses Rapports avec la Population* (Paris: Chez Delaunay, 1819).

<sup>49</sup> Heinrich Bürgers to Karl Marx, 30 August 1847, in *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)* (Berlin, 1927–35), vol III, ii, p. 351.

The difference between Marx's approach and that found in France, England, or, later, Germany was most marked in relation to the 'proletariat'. In France, the basic demand of French republicans or socialists was that the proletariat should be recognised as 'citizens' and reunited with an undivided nation, a demand which they achieved in February 1848. In England, the position of the Chartists, basing their position upon Locke and the 1689 Settlement, was that the working classes be fully recognised as part of the people, whose consent was necessary as the legitimate basis of any government. But in Marx's case, there was no historic appeal to a pre-existing or aboriginal constitution. Unlike the 'proletariat' or 'working classes' in France or England, the proletariat depicted by Marx was governed by a vocation. As he explained in *The Holy Family*, 'It is not a question what this or that proletarian or even the whole proletariat, at the moment, *regards* as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do'.<sup>50</sup> The genealogy of this claim can be traced back to the religious criticism of the Young Hegelians. In 1835, David Strauss's *Life of Jesus* claimed that if Christianity were to be saved for modern science, the figure of Christ would have to be replaced by the human species or the idea of 'humanity' in the whole of its history. For only the infinite spirit of the human race could bring about the union of finite and infinite, as it was depicted in Hegel's portrayal of 'Absolute Spirit'.<sup>51</sup>

The next step was taken by Feuerbach, who replaced Hegel's 'spirit' or Strauss' history of the spiritual advance of the 'species' by a supposedly more naturalistic notion of a 'species being' whose expression would enable the flowering of man's communal nature. 'Species being, the union of I and thou' was man's true human nature. But it had been blocked by the development of Christianity, which was responsible for the individualism of modern society. In removing this obstacle by uncovering the natural basis of 'the unity of man with man', Feuerbach was saluted by Marx for discovering the philosophical basis for socialism. In Marx's extension of this idea, man was subjected to the false reality of private property in political economy, just as in religion he was subjected to the false reality of God. The task of the critic was to restore 'man' to a true consciousness of himself by uncovering the essential reality of 'species man' buried beneath an inverted world.

The theological character of this Feuerbachian humanism was exposed by Max Stirner in his *Ego and Its Own* of 1844. According to Stirner, in

<sup>50</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, MECW, vol. 4, p. 37; emphases in the original.

<sup>51</sup> D. Strauss, *Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (Tübingen: 1835); and G. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), pp. 76–79.

Feuerbach's work, ideal human attributes were detached from human individuals and presented in religion as the attributes of a fictive God. But they were not returned to these individuals. Instead, they were re-assigned to an equally fictive creation, 'Man' or 'Species Being'. 'Man' continued to be presented to individuals as their 'vocation' or 'ethical goal'; in other words, another version of the Christian God. Marx tried to evade this criticism by restating his position as an ostensibly empirical observation. Communism, he claimed was not an 'ideal', it was 'the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things'.<sup>52</sup> But behind the empirical facade was still to be found the remains of Young Hegelian Christology.

These difficulties were also apparent Marx's writings for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch-ökonomische Revue* of 1849–50, which Engels optimistically entitled *The Class Struggles in France* when he published them in book form in 1895. Cast in this form, this was a strange text. There was virtually no mention of either the political or the economic context. The text focused upon the battle in Paris in June 1848 following the decision of the National Assembly to close down the *Ateliers* set up by the state to provide work to the many left workless as a result of mass unemployment exacerbated by the large-scale migration to the cities.<sup>53</sup> The National Assembly decision occasioned an insurrection led for the most part by those discharged from the *Ateliers*.

This was described by Marx as class war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat: 'the first great battle . . . fought between the two classes that split modern society'. But neither the proletariat nor the bourgeois were defined.<sup>54</sup> Their identity in terms of the Marxian conception of 'the relations of production' remained obscure. References to the 'proletariat' occasionally slipped back into that of 'the people', while references to the 'bourgeoisie' were ubiquitous, but could easily be exchanged for the term 'republic'. The executive of the new republic was not composed of employers, industrial or otherwise, nor were the insurgents by any means exclusively composed of wage workers; many small employers were also involved. There was similarly no account of what prompted the resistance of the insurgents – the threat of destitution following the closing down of the *Ateliers* – nor of their main grievance – the reneging by the republic on its promise of the 'right to work'. The rebellion was not caused by the action of the employing class, but by the Assembly's dislike of what they feared as 'communism'. The June insurgents possessed no

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190.

<sup>53</sup> See M. Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>54</sup> Marx, 'The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850', *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 66.

nationally recognised leaders. Nor did they make any demands beyond the insistence that the 'democratic and social' republic honour the promises it had made in February 1848. Marx could produce no solid evidence of the existence of a class war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and was reduced to defending his argument with a fiction:

In place of its demands, exuberant in form, but petty and even bourgeois still in content, the concessions of which it wanted to wring from the February Republic, there appeared the bold slogan of revolutionary struggle: '*overthrow the Bourgeoisie! Dictatorship of the working class.*'<sup>55</sup>

In the early 1850s, Marx maintained the approach to 'class struggle' that he had adopted in 1844–45 as if nothing that had happened in the Revolutions of 1848 presented any challenge to his position. 'The *existence of classes*', he wrote to Joseph Weydemeyer, 'is merely bound up with *certain historical phases in the development of production*'.<sup>56</sup> But he was unable to enlarge upon the thought. In the unpublished manuscripts intended to form part of the second volume of *Capital*, he embarked upon a chapter on 'classes'.<sup>57</sup> But he found that he had nothing new to say, and after a little more than a page, he abandoned it. His researches on the emergence of capitalism, or the 'value form', as he called it in the *Grundrisse*, highlighted the fact that this was not like other 'modes of production'. The 'value form' was not a product of conquest or force, but had emerged within civil society. It could not, therefore, be understood like slavery or feudalism. It was impossible to understand its origins in terms of the crude polarities of class struggle. What was required instead was a return to the analogy between the mystifications of religion and the mystifications surrounding the economy: the theme he developed in *Capital* in his treatment of 'the fetishism of commodities'.<sup>58</sup>

In the 1850s, there was a gradual retreat from the political rhetoric of class struggle. In France, Guizot's state of *les classes moyennes* fell in February 1848 and the experiment was never repeated. Guizot himself lost all further influence even though he lived on into the 1870s. Already in 1849, the Party of Order, made up mostly of his former friends, begged him not to re-enter political life. Memory of the July Regime had become an embarrassment. Its *raison d'être*, the defence of the revolution coupled with a rejection of universal suffrage and the republic, lost meaning

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69; emphases in the original.

<sup>56</sup> 'Karl Marx to Joseph Weydemeyer', 5 March 1852, *MECW*, vol. 39, p. 62.

<sup>57</sup> Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, *MECW*, vol. 37, pp. 870–71.

<sup>58</sup> Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, *MECW*, vol. 35, pp. 81–94.

after the Revolution of 1848. So did any further appeal to the 'bourgeoisie'. Adolphe Thiers, the new leader of the Party of Order, built up his power through an appeal to the particular interests of various propertied groups rather than calling upon the putative collective ethos of the 'bourgeoisie'.

The ambition to align the new state with the political organisation of a 'class', as Stein warned, had been a failure. It was unable to establish a new principle of legitimacy for the state and instead established the 'proletariat', defined by its exclusion from that state and committed by this exclusion to its downfall. The liberal state was no longer to be embedded within a particular social stratum; the principles of universal suffrage and the republic were accepted. Social conflict was now accepted as something that would occur within an accepted political framework in which all were formally citizens.

A similar retreat from the politics of class occurred in England. In the 1840s Peel had explicitly refused the option of equating the state or the Conservative Party with any particular class or group, whether of land or industry. He was obsessively interested in the lessons which could be learned from the history of the French Revolution, and the collection of books and pamphlets on the revolution made by his closest friend, Croker, came to form the basis of the British Museum collection. It was a combination of evangelical Protestantism and liberal economics which provided Peel and the liberal Tories with the elements of their reform programme. State and social institutions were to be purified of corruption and social relations were to be moralised. This project did not involve the reliance upon one particular social constituency. Instead, evangelicalism afforded a basis of support, almost comparable in its breadth to that later represented by republicanism in France after 1870. Peel declined Cobden's invitation to lead a party of the middle orders after 1846 and Cobden came to see that the attempt to form a radical anti-aristocratic party in the name of the middle class was hopeless. Like other parliamentary radicals, he ceased appealing directly to the middle class and reverted to a language of the people. A similar refusal of this sectional identification was built into the constitution of the Liberal Party by Gladstone and the Peelites at the end of the 1850s. In the 1860s and 1870s, the dominant juxtaposition in Gladstone's speeches became that between 'the masses' and 'the classes'. As in France, the political appeal to class had become identified with unacceptable selfishness.

In both countries a form of liberalism was finally devised whose moral force was effectively distanced from any explicit reliance upon the supposed special interests of the bourgeoisie or the middle classes. By detaching the state from class and liberalism from a special social constituency, the struggle between the 'bourgeois' and the 'proletarian', as it had been evoked in the 1840s, became irrelevant. Future social and political conflict occurred within the framework of a state whose legitimacy was no longer significantly contested.



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